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ABSTRACT

This training guide and reference manual helps educational leaders learn to be facilitators in the program called "Improving the Human Environment of Schools" (IHES), a participative problem-solving method designed to improve a school's "quality of life." An introductory chapter reviews the history of IHES and outlines IHES facilitator training. Chapters 2 through 6 follow the 3-day IHES training program. Chapter 2 presents the building blocks of IHES facilitation, including a review of basic communication skills and the advanced skills of managing conflict and anger. Chapter 3 describes the components of IHES facilitation and the process of facilitating IHES group meetings. Chapter 4 outlines the principles and techniques of problem solving in small groups. Chapter 5 discusses background material on small-group processes and strategies for maintaining an IHES group as a fully functioning entity in the school. Chapter 6 provides information on advanced IHES facilitation methods and suggestions for improving skills. Next, the appendix describes how an IHES group is established. Finally, the authors present a list of references on small-group processes, conflict management, communication, and facilitation. (Author/MCG)

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Improving the Human Environment of Schools

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Bill Honig—Superintendent of Public Instruction
Sacramento, 1984

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Improving the Human Environment of Schools

Facilitation

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Preface

This manual, entitled *Improving the Human Environment of Schools [IHES] Facilitation*, was written to guide school leadership personnel in their efforts to solve school problems through the involvement and participation of the school community: teachers, students, parents, staff, and community members. Although these persons often hold diverse points of view, they have a common interest in improving the school's human environment.

IHES facilitation presents the philosophy of collaborative decision making as well as procedures for group problem solving developed in the Office of Intergroup Relations, California State Department of Education.

The IHES facilitation method has been taught to school district and school personnel in northern and southern California and has been employed successfully in several schools to solve school environment-related problems that were affecting student achievement. The manual was designed primarily as a reference guide for persons who participate in the IHES facilitation training provided by the Office of Intergroup Relations. It also can serve as a valuable text for those who have not had the training but who wish to learn the method.

We extend our special thanks to Joan P. Avis, Consultant in the Office of Intergroup Relations and principal author of the manual and principal trainer in the IHES facilitation method, and to Elizabeth D. Bigelow, Assistant Professor at the University of San Francisco and a major contributor to the development of the manual.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to IHES Facilitation

Improving the Human Environment of Schools [IHES] Facilitation is a manual designed to assist you during the course of your training in facilitation and afterwards when you are leading an IHES group. You are encouraged during your training to write notes in the manual and to read it between sessions. The manual is not a substitute for training and cannot provide the most valuable learning experience of all—repeated practice, together with feedback from skilled facilitators and other participants in training as well as your own assessments of your strengths and areas for improvement. However, the manual can be of enormous help to you after you have completed your training, expecially when you are planning an IHES meeting, developing a process agenda, reviewing problem-solving methods, or leading an IHES group.

This chapter contains an introduction to the IHES group, a discussion of the history of the IHES concept, and an overview of IHES training.

What Are IHES Groups?

IHES (pronounced "eyes") groups are established and maintained to assist a school community in addressing issues related to the human environment in the school. The goal of IHES groups is to improve the quality of

life in the school. The groups work to increase opportunities for the growth and development of individual members of the school community and to promote constructive interaction. These important features of IHES groups are reflected in the name. In essence, IHES groups are:

- *I's.* They are interested individuals who represent themselves, even though they are representative of many school-community groups.
- *Eyes.* They view the school from an expanded perspective, seeing problems and envisioning solutions.
- *Ayes.* They affirm the goal of improving the human environment of the school and support the work of the group.

By taking responsibility for addressing issues, concerns, and problems in the school's human environment and working in a systematic way to effect change, the IHES groups themselves become an important and integral part of the school.

An IHES group begins by identifying and analyzing areas for improvement, examining many solutions, and choosing the most appropriate solution. Next, the group usually enlists the support and assistance of others to move its plans into action. The group monitors its impact on the area of the human environment selected for intervention and continues to identify new areas for improvement. The IHES process is a positive one; it encourages constructive problem solving and collaborative decision making. In its workings the IHES group models many of the qualities it hopes to promote in the larger school environment, such as respect for others, commitment to common goals, task orientation, and appreciation of differences.

History of the IHES Concept

In 1977 the Office of Intergroup Relations, California State Department of Education, commissioned a group of educators to analyze the social aspects of school problems and formulate strategies for change. The committee's charge was to develop a manual to assist

school staff members in addressing human relations issues and concerns in the school environment. The work of the committee resulted in the publication of *Improving the Human Environment of Schools: Problems and Strategies* (Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1979). The purposes of that manual are to help principals identify and monitor human relations issues and concerns and to assist other members of the school community in becoming more aware of these problems and their own responsibility for finding solutions. Although the committee did not intend to provide specific implementation methods or approaches, it did recommend that a group be established in each school to identify and prioritize key school-specific issues, concerns, or problems. This group was called a School Human Environment Assessment Group, and some general recommendations for its composition and process were offered.

After the publication of the 1979 manual, the Office of Intergroup Relations initiated a series of one-day training sessions to introduce educators to the manual and to provide them with more specific information on how to establish groups in their schools. In response to the need expressed by educators for additional training in the process of conducting such groups, the Office of Intergroup Relations designed and sponsored a three-day training program that provided participants with the necessary skills to conduct small-group problem-solving sessions related to the human environment in the school. In recognition of the fact that the school groups perform more than assessment, the name of the groups was changed in 1981 to Improving the Human Environment of Schools (IHES) groups.

As the concepts of school climate and IHES received increasing attention, the Office of Intergroup Relations refined its training program further to assist school district and school site staff members in establishing and maintaining ongoing IHES programs tailored to their specific needs and environments. This manual

was developed in response to requests from trained facilitators in the schools for further information that would assist them in their work with IHES groups.

Overview of IHES Training

An IHES group, established and trained with assistance from the Office of Intergroup Relations (OIR), provides an opportunity for a school or school district to address issues related to the human environment in the school within a task-oriented, problem-solving group context.

To establish an IHES group in a school or several IHES groups in a school district, an OIR consultant first meets with leaders in the school or district to determine mutual interests, the extent of commitment to consensus decision making, and special needs or circumstances. Next, the school and district leadership identify interested individuals in the school community who will receive training in the IHES facilitation method that has been developed for conducting IHES groups.

IHES facilitator training, which usually takes three days, is conducted by OIR consultants and covers the following general topics:

1. Building blocks of IHES facilitation
   a. Review of basic communication skills
   b. Advanced communication skills—managing conflict and anger
2. Introduction to IHES facilitation and the concept of consensus decision making in groups
3. Introduction to the problem-solving sequence and problem-solving methods for groups
4. Facilitation of IHES groups
5. Advanced facilitation methods

Methods of training include minilectures, demonstrations, simulations, experiential activities, and supervised practice. At the conclusion of the training, participants will have acquired the basic skills of an IHES facilitator and will be at least minimally competent to conduct an IHES group independently.

After the three-day training of facilitators has been completed, the teacher, administrator, student, parent, and community membership of the IHES groups is established by the school leadership. A one-day training and planning session is scheduled for all IHES facilitators and newly selected or elected group members. On this day a consultant from the Office of Intergroup Relations introduces all participants to the philosophy, purposes, and procedures of an IHES group. They observe and participate in a demonstration of a simulated IHES group meeting. Next, the IHES groups meet with their facilitators to identify, prioritize, and analyze issues related to the human environment in their respective schools. In subsequent meetings the participants will seek to address these issues in a positive, constructive, and structured manner. The consultant provides support and assistance to local IHES facilitators as they conduct group meetings and offers constructive comments on their facilitating skills.

As needed, the consultant meets with local IHES facilitators as a group to conduct advanced training or attends subsequent IHES group meetings to provide assistance and consultation to the facilitators. A consultant from the Office of Intergroup Relations continues to provide follow-up assistance to the IHES groups as requested by the school or school district.

Overview of the Manual

Chapters 2 through 6 are designed to correspond to the contents of the three-day IHES training program. In Chapter 2 the authors present the building blocks of IHES facilitation, including a review of basic communication skills and the advanced skills of managing conflict and anger. Chapter 3 contains a description of the components of IHES facilitation and the process of facilitating IHES group meetings. Chapter 4 outlines the principles and techniques of problem solving in small groups. In Chapter 5 background material on small-group processes and strategies for maintaining an IHES group as a fully

functioning entity in the school in discussed. Chapter 6 provides information on advanced IHES facilitation methods and suggestions for improving skills. Next, the appendix contains a description of how an IHES group is established. Finally, the authors present a list of references on small-group processes, conflict management, communication, and facilitation.

In Conclusion—a Beginning

As you become more familiar with and experience the role and responsibilities of an IHES facilitator, you will find that much of your past learning in communications and in small groups will be useful and adaptable to this new situation. In addition, you will learn new approaches and methods that will bring increased confidence and competence in taking on the role of an IHES facilitator.

Chapter 2

Communication Skills for the Facilitator

Educators are, in general, excellent communicators. After all, exchanging information and ideas is their stock-in-trade and the basis of their professional expertise. However, training as an IHES facilitator requires the use of a specific set of communication skills that may differ somewhat from those used every day.

To prepare you for the role of facilitator, this chapter reviews the fundamentals of communication that are particularly useful in the resolution of problems encountered in attempts to improve the human environment of schools. These skills include:

- Developing accurate perceptions
- Active listening
- Responding and clarifying
- Resolving conflicts

Developing Accurate Perceptions

School problems come in all sizes and dimensions. Sometimes you may need to redirect the behavior of a single student or confront the negative attitudes of a parent. At other times you may be called upon to participate in a districtwide effort to reshape the curriculum to improve academic achievement. Whatever the scope of the problem in which you find yourself

engaged—whether it involves just you and another person or the competing needs of a number of persons or groups—the first step in coming to terms with the problem is to see it for what it is, to perceive it accurately.

To do so is not easy because you must, in your new role as facilitator, put aside your own values and biases and strive to view the problem from the perspectives of others. To start with, you need to recognize that each person is different and acts and reacts to different experiences and aspects of the environment. Respect for individual differences and a genuine desire to understand the other person's point of view are essential attitudes of the professional IHES facilitator. These attitudes are the very foundation of communications aimed at improving the human environment of schools.

A useful strategy for improving one's perceptions—and thus for improving problem analysis—is to keep in mind the distinctions among (1) observations; (2) inferences; and (3) judgments.

Observations are those qualities that can be perceived with the sense organs—what can be seen or, to a lesser extent, heard, touched, smelled, or tasted. Strictly speaking, observations have nothing to do with thinking or feeling about what is being perceived. Because observations are about as close to pure fact as possible, one can also be confident that high levels of agreement will occur among all parties observing the same phenomenon.

Interpretation based on the context—the how, when, and where—of an observation is referred to as *inference*. Through interpretation a person decides the meaning, the underlying story, of what has been observed, on the basis of one's own social, cultural, intellectual, or emotional dispositions. Although this process is perfectly natural in that it enables a person to make sense of experiences, the inferences drawn are often based on individual stereotypes and prejudices that may not be appropriate to the situation at hand.

When a person makes *judgments* about what is observed, that person is stating how he or she feels about something on the basis of a personal value system. Approval or disapproval of what is seen is based on one's sense of good and bad, right and wrong. This, of course, will determine how one will subsequently tend to act in relation to the situation or problem.

As an exercise, try to describe someone as fully as possible, using only observational statements. You will probably find that it is hard to stick with specific behavioral attributes without drawing conclusions or generalizations about that person. Next, notice the inferences and judgments you make. How are your attitudes affected by the age, sex, or race of the person? How are your attitudes affected by the context in which the person is observed? What do you think is the basis of your inferences or judgments?

When you are in the role of private citizen, your inferences and judgments are entirely your own affair. In the role of IHES facilitator, however, your neutrality in the course of the problem-solving process is absolutely essential, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. As facilitator it is your duty to be as observant as possible—in other words, to stick with behaviors and specifics—so that you do not impede the fact-finding process or cause divisiveness among the parties concerned.

Active Listening

In conjunction with observational skills, active listening must also be developed. Both are crucial to effective facilitation and problem solving. Active listening, as opposed to just hearing, is more difficult than is commonly realized. Often, when persons think they are listening, they are in reality mentally engaged in forming an answer to what the other person is saying or in evaluating what it means. IHES facilitators must try to understand what the message means from the other person's perspective.

Listening, then, is not a passive process of silence during which the other person talks on. Rather, it is active, requiring energy and effort to comprehend and remember what the person is trying to communicate while suspending your own judgments about the content. To become a better listener, try to apply these rules:

1. *Get ready to listen.* Just because only your ears are involved, do not think that you can listen well while thumbing through papers or doing something else with your hands. Give the other person your full attention by putting other things aside and assuming a physically relaxed position. You will then be mentally alert and ready to engage in this communication.
2. *Listen to understand rather than to refute.* Postpone your judgment of what the person is saying and strive to ascertain what the person means. On the basis of your own experience, imagine how you might feel in his or her situation.
3. *Control your emotions.* If you find yourself reacting strongly to what is being said to you with anger, annoyance, or irritation, try to put your feelings aside for the time being. If you can define or locate the source of your reaction, so much the better.

Responding and Clarifying

Now that the importance of careful observation and active listening has been discussed, it is appropriate to discuss how you, as an IHES facilitator and problem solver, can improve the quality of communication by (1) encouraging other persons to express themselves completely; and (2) helping them to identify the essence of the problem, issue, or concern they are trying to discuss. Using the techniques described here will enable you and the group to arrive together at a reasoned analysis of the problem and to share in its eventual solution.

Using Nonverbal Attending Behaviors

Communication involves nonverbal as well as verbal components. For example, some experts contend that words alone constitute only 7 percent of a message; tone of voice and inflection account for 38 percent; and facial expressions, posture, and body gestures account for 55 percent (*Human Behavior and Leadership*, 1977). It is useful for us, therefore, to consider what we convey to others nonverbally and perhaps unconsciously.

A few simple techniques and behaviors will communicate your interest in and respect for IHES group members, your openness to each of their ideas, and your attentiveness to the group's process:

1. *Eye contact* indicates your interest and serves to keep the person speaking focused on the communication process. Looking away from the person is not only discourteous but may also be frustrating to the speaker. On the other hand, be careful not to stare; just relax and be natural. In addition, you should be aware of cultural differences in holding eye contact. For example, children from some ethnic groups are taught to look away or down in the presence of an adult because to maintain eye contact would be considered disrespectful.
2. *Body language and gestures* are also signals of your receptivity to others. Try to relax your body, particularly your upper body, shoulders, and arms. A facilitator with tightly folded arms or hunched shoulders may appear tense and defensive and may impede communication and provide an inappropriate model for the group.
3. *Nodding* as a person is speaking is an excellent technique for encouraging open communication. It is the essential nonverbal expression of the *aye* portion of the IHES philosophy—affirming the contributions of the group members and the process as a whole.

Inviting Expression and Discussion

In conjunction with nonverbal attending behaviors, certain minimal verbal encouragers are also useful in opening avenues of communication and inviting full participation of IHES group members. As a person is talking, you might try the following responses to keep him or her going: "Umm-hmm . . ." or "Uh-huh . . ." "Oh . . ." "So . . ." "Then . . ." "And . . ." "Tell me more." Or you might repeat one or two key words, simply restate the other person's words exactly, or remain silent.

In addition, as an IHES facilitator you will be asking many questions of the group to stimulate discussion and clarify or analyze an idea or suggestion. You can enhance this process by applying these guidelines:

1. *Ask open-ended rather than closed questions.* Open questions generally begin with the words "What . . . ?" or "How . . . ?" or "Could/Would . . . ?" Questions such as "What is your perception of the problem?" or "Could you tell me more about what happened?" have the advantage of helping people to elaborate a point and to clarify specific types of behavior. In addition, the questions enable you to focus attention on the group's feelings. Closed questions, on the other hand, tend to cut off communication because they can generally be answered with a simple yes or no, such as questions beginning with "Have you . . . ?" or "Will you . . . ?" Questions beginning with "Why . . . ?" are also usually closed because they tend to elicit defensive responses.
2. *Avoid leading questions.* Be careful not to entrap the group with a question that leads toward your own conclusion as opposed to theirs. A question such as "Are you doing that because the principal pressured you?" carries certain assumptions which may result in your alienation from the group. Keep your questions open-ended.
3. *Try to phrase questions in a positive manner.* Do not ask, "What went wrong at this meeting?"

Instead, ask "What might we have done differently to make this meeting more successful?"

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing, or restating what a person has said, can contribute to open communications. First, it lets the person know that you have heard and are trying to understand what was said, and it nicely acknowledges the contribution. In addition, it provides a check on the accuracy of the facilitator's perceptions and will assist you in developing your active listening skills. Finally, it assists the recorder in capturing the essence of the communication.

Reflecting Feelings

Paraphrasing deals with the content of what was said. Statements that emphasize and clarify the feeling tone of the message can also further communication and trust in a group. Reflecting feelings is, however, a difficult skill and should be attempted only when you confidently perceive the need to reveal the emotional component of a message or when a distinct discrepancy exists between what a person has said and how it was said. What is important here is empathy, the ability to sense accurately the emotional world of another. Proceed with caution, however, as offending a group member with an off-target comment could seriously impede the progress of the group.

Summarizing

Summarizing is an attempt to recapitulate, condense, and crystallize what has been said. It is important as well as rewarding to the group for you, as facilitator, to summarize at the conclusion of each activity or segment of a large task. To do so reminds the group of where it has come from, what has occurred, and what decisions were made. It also tends to shape the direction of future actions. Be sure to ascertain the group's agreement with your summary because unintentional distortions or inaccuracies should be corrected before moving on.

Resolving Conflicts

Conflict is, at some level, a part of everyday life. It is a natural social process that can take various forms and have various outcomes. In a supportive, task-oriented environment, it is possible to resolve conflict cooperatively rather than competitively, with definite gains rather than losses for the parties involved.

Within any group of individuals, especially one as diverse and as committed to change as an IHES group, conflict is bound to occur. For one thing, just being in a group poses new tensions for an individual who may worry about acceptance or rejection by other group members. In addition, each group member may feel a special need or obligation to promote or defend the value system he or she is expected to represent within the group, thus engendering some level of conflict. Finally, the problem-solving process itself can be stressful as the group strives for consensus.

As an IHES facilitator you must prepare yourself to address the occurrence of conflict within your group by becoming aware of your own response to conflict and learning to address it directly. You will, it is hoped, come to view the incidence of conflict as a necessary and creative dynamic within the group and to treat it not only as a useful and productive event but also as a special opportunity for problem solving. This section is designed to heighten your awareness of some issues relevant to your role in resolving conflict in the context of an IHES group.

Value of Conflict

Conflict occurs when the concerns, goals, or values held by two or more parties are perceived to be incompatible or mutually exclusive. Conflict is often characterized by behavior intended to defeat or suppress one's adversary or to create an imbalance of power. As such, its destructive potential, if left unchecked or unmediated, may result in hurt feelings, the inhibition of other members of the group, or,

worse, the sidetracking of progress toward your goals.

Yet, in addition to its obvious dangers, conflict has a number of personal and social values (Filley, 1975). Specifically, within the IHES group problem-solving process, conflict can produce some particularly fruitful gains.

1. *It can stimulate the search for new facts or solutions.* When two parties disagree about alternative ideas or courses to follow, they may be motivated to seek another solution acceptable to both.
2. *It may increase the probability of "win-win" solutions.* Although conflict may resolve itself in a win-lose manner, with one side the victor and the other the vanquished, it also allows for the airing of even the most negative and emotional aspects of the situation. In so doing, a certain amount of tension and antagonism is released and communicated, thereby becoming factored into the development of consensus and bettering intragroup relations in the long run.
3. *It may lead to increased trust among the members as problems are resolved without the exclusion of any individual member's position.* It can also simultaneously reinforce the individuality of group members.

Responses to Conflict

In the face of conflict, a person's behavior can generally be characterized by one of these five different styles (Auvine and others, 1978):

1. *Competing/forcing*—striving to satisfy your concern at any cost, even at the expense of others.
2. *Avoiding*—withdrawing from conflict by failing to acknowledge its existence or refusing to deal with it.
3. *Accommodating/smoothing*—attempting to preserve the relationship by focusing on areas of agreement and ignoring areas of disagreement. The result is to give in to the other's concern at the expense of your own.

4. *Compromising*—bargaining so that each side gets part of what it wants and gives up part of what it wants. Sometimes compromise is the best resolution to a conflict. Often, however, a compromise is rushed into without an examination of all the alternatives because it is presumed that "splitting the difference" is the best possible outcome.
5. *Problem solving/collaborating*—agreeing to look for some way of satisfying both your concern and the other's so that the feeling of losing is avoided and a "win-win" solution is achieved.

When it comes to facilitating, you will need to develop and use the problem-solving mode far more than any other. Nevertheless, all five modes represent a set of useful social skills entirely appropriate in certain situations. For example, it can sometimes be wise to "let well enough alone" (avoiding) or to "kill them with kindness" (accommodating). Although everyone is capable of using all five modes, most persons tend to use some modes more effectively or frequently than others. It is important for you to be aware of which mode is comfortable or uncomfortable for you and which you may use infrequently.

Forms of Conflict

In addition to knowing your preferred style or mode of dealing with conflict, you need to consider which of the forms of conflict you feel most able and least able to deal with:

1. *Intrapersonal*—struggles within yourself
2. *Interpersonal*—struggles between yourself and another
3. *Intragroup*—struggles between yourself and other members within a given group
4. *Intergroup*—struggles involving yourself as representative of a group and other representatives of another group
5. *Institutional*—struggles between yourself and agents of a given institution

Again, no single form is inherently better or worse than another, but it is important for you to be conscious of your own preferences and sensitivities so that you can handle conflicts more effectively as they arise in the course of facilitating. In addition, you will be more able to identify the conflict styles of group members and alter your own approach accordingly.

Management of Anger

As a facilitator you will also need to prepare yourself to deal with anger as an almost inevitable expression of conflict within the group. Remember that, in trying to improve the human environment of schools, you will be trafficking in the realm of personal value systems. As a result you are bound to encounter intense emotional reactions along the way. Try to (1) anticipate that emotional reactions will occur sooner or later; (2) deal with them as a natural occurrence; (3) protect the other members of the group from attack; and (4) stay uninvolved personally, even when the anger may be directed at you.

As a strategy for resolving a person's angry feelings, the following easy-to-remember five-step process should be kept in mind:

***A**cknowledge angry feelings in the other person.* Remember that reflecting the feeling level of a person's communication can often have a defusing effect.

***N**otice reactive feelings in yourself.* For example, if you feel yourself wanting to attack or withdraw, remind yourself of your responsibility to address these issues directly.

***G**ive a summary and reflection of the content.* You thereby acknowledge the person's contribution as valuable to the task at hand while refocusing on the task.

***E**volve a shared problem statement.* Both of you are thereby united in your attempts to understand the problem.

***R**esolve through action-oriented problem solving,* which is at the heart of the IHES process itself.

The key to transforming conflict into a productive encounter is to remain *neutral, relaxed,* and *flexible.* Do not let the situation frighten or distress you personally and help the group members by making suggestions about how they might deal with the conflict cooperatively. In doing so you will also model these important attributes for the other group members.

As an IHES facilitator you will also need to practice using the problem-solving modality mentioned earlier because "win-win" solutions are the goal of the IHES group process. It is also well to remember that the IHES group is first and foremost task-oriented. It is not meant to provide psychotherapy or human relations training. In the course of this manual and the IHES training, you will be provided with many problem-solving tools that should enable you to manage conflicts that might occur during an IHES meeting.

Chapter 3

Basic IHES Facilitation

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to teach the application of communication skills to a specific method of facilitation designed for use in the schools. That method is called the *IHES facilitation method*.[1] Being trained in conducting meetings according to this method will enable you and your group to deal more effectively and efficiently with the various problems of improving the human environment of schools.

As a review and reinforcement of your training as facilitators, a discussion of the following items is included in this chapter:

- Uses of the IHES facilitation method
- Role and responsibilities of the facilitator
- Fundamentals of facilitation
- Role and responsibilities of the recorder

Uses of the IHES Facilitation Method

The uniqueness of the IHES facilitation method can be highlighted by a brief consideration of the traditional leader method of conducting meetings. The leader method is generally used in conducting department or faculty meetings and directing the work of committees and conference presentations. This

[1]Two other sources for facilitation of meetings are Doyle and Straus (1976) and Auvine and others (1978). See also the other selected references located in the back of this manual.

method is particularly valuable when the purpose of a meeting is to impart information or obtain feedback on current or proposed policies and procedures.

In this model the person designated as group leader is generally the same person who acts as the administrator of the organization and to whom is delegated most authority for day-to-day operations. Included in his or her institutional role is responsibility for calling meetings, setting agendas, acting as chairperson, and conducting and controlling the discussion. During meetings, therefore, the leader plays a dual role—a power role and a process role. That is, he or she must control not only the content of the meetings but also the process used to engage the content.

When the major purpose of a meeting is to come to terms with a significant institutional problem by analyzing, sharing perceptions, evaluating alternative solutions, and so forth, the traditional leader-led group can quickly get bogged down. Some of the problems that can be readily observed in meetings are the following (Doyle and Straus, 1976):

1. Tendency of members to go off in several directions at once as a result of individual perceptions, interests, anxieties, or problems
2. Such poor control that members of the group are more likely to attack each other or each other's ideas than to address the task at hand
3. Wasted time, wheel spinning, and repetition of ideas
4. Domination of the meeting by the chairperson, who generally talks most of the time
5. Tendency of the chairperson to manipulate the discussion, especially when he or she has an investment in the issue under discussion
6. Tendency of group members to tell the leader or chairperson what they think he or she wants to hear—to be manipulative for personal advantage
7. Poor quality of data produced by these discussions because the group members are playing it safe by not stating how they really feel

8. Feelings of impotence and low morale on the part of the group members because no real changes are produced
9. Restrictions placed on the leader that prevent him or her from reflecting on and learning from the comments of contributors

The IHES facilitation method eliminates these problems by separating the power and process aspects of conducting meetings. This is accomplished by the introduction of a facilitator whose sole responsibility is to guide the problem-solving process of the group and whose personal interest in the outcome is completely neutral. This situation leaves the administrator or chairperson free to focus on the content and to participate fully in the group discussions without giving up legitimate power and authority. That person is also protected from having to mediate interpersonal disputes or differences of opinion while at the same time protecting group members from manipulation by the leader.

The most important characteristic of the IHES facilitation method is that it allows for collaborative problem solving and consensus decision making or "win-win" solutions to problems. In other forms of decision making, such as majority vote, executive decision, or even arbitration, some parties involved will win and some will lose. But the IHES facilitation method works to include every member's point of view and to arrive at a group consensus. An individual's opinion or suggestion that cannot be incorporated is never dropped from consideration but only deferred for later discussion and action. For this reason the IHES facilitation method is said to be based on "win-win" outcomes.

In summary, then, the IHES facilitation method of group problem solving does the following:

1. Reduces the confusion produced by the failure to distinguish between the content (the issue, problem, or task) and the process (the way of working or deciding) of a group

2. Reduces the potential for manipulation by the leader or by other group members
3. Achieves more democratic means of including all points of view, no matter how diverse
4. Protects the rights and opinions of all group members, regardless of the amount of power or authority they might hold in the group
5. Provides a readily accessible record of what has been said
6. Provides for "win-win" solutions through the use of consensus decision-making methods

(See Figure 1, which contrasts the traditional leader method and the IHES facilitation method.)

Roles and Responsibilities of the Facilitator

As stated previously, the facilitator's role is to attend to the process of a group meeting. In other words, you need to ensure that the tasks or problems or issues that the group has been assembled to address are dealt with and worked through to closure. You must pay close attention to the following:

- For the participants to stay involved, the facilitator needs to pay attention to the personal and interpersonal expression of ideas and feelings.
- For the participants to explore all relevant issues safely and thoroughly, the facilitator must know how and when to respond accurately and nonjudgmentally.
- For the participants to come to a fuller understanding of the problem and assume responsibility, the facilitator needs to make connections between ideas and clarify the opinions offered.
- For the group to move forward to action plans and solutions, the facilitator must be adept at methods that will take the group to closure.

In addition, as a facilitator you must educate the group about this new method of decision making by modeling and demonstrating the values of consensus

Figure 1

TYPICAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE		IHES GROUP
1. MEETINGS ARE LED BY THE CHAIR-PERSON.	——	1. MEETINGS ARE CONDUCTED BY THE FACILITATOR.
2. CHAIRPERSON AND GROUP ATTEND TO BOTH CONTENT AND PROCESS.	——	2. GROUP ATTENDS TO CONTENT; FACILITATOR ATTENDS TO PROCESS.
3. RECORD OF MEETING, IF ONE IS MADE, CONSISTS OF ONE MEMBER'S NOTES.	——	3. POSTED GROUP RECORD, VISIBLE TO ALL MEMBERS, IS COMPILED BY A RECORDER.
4. DECISIONS ARE TYPICALLY REACHED BY VOTING, DEFAULT, OR FIAT.	——	4. DECISIONS ARE REACHED BY CONSENSUS METHODS.
5. CONTENT OFTEN INCLUDES MULTIPLE AGENDAS, DISTRACTIONS, DIFFUSION OF THINKING, AND DISRUPTIVE CONFLICT.	——	5. CONTENT IS FOCUSED AND TASK-ORIENTED. CONFLICT IS MEDIATED BY THE FACILITATOR.
6. STATUS DIFFERENCES AMONG MEMBERS ARE APPARENT.	——	6. ALL MEMBERS ARE AFFORDED EQUAL STATUS.
7. MEMBERS SIT AROUND A TABLE.	——	7. MEMBERS SIT IN A SEMICIRCLE FACING FACILITATOR AND GROUP RECORD.

and collaboration in your own behavior. You must foster in the group such attitudes as:

1. *Democracy*—ensuring that each member has an equal opportunity to participate and respects the opinions and ideas of others without prejudice
2. *Responsibility*—reminding yourself and the group of how important individual participation is and how it affects the content and process of the group
3. *Cooperation*—working together to achieve common goals
4. *Honesty*—including your own values, feelings, concerns, and priorities

Further, as a facilitator you must continually maintain awareness of your primary responsibility to the group in order to prevent potential abuses of your position. For example, as a facilitator you must carefully define your role in the work of the group. Because most participants automatically relate to you as an authority figure, it is important that you resist the temptation to use the power delegated to you to fulfill your own needs for attention, respect, or friendship. Remember that your job is to help the group find its own solutions to its problems and that the end product will be only as good as the process you provide.

The role of facilitator generally requires a major adjustment in your own concept of leadership and in the group's expectations of a leader. For this reason you need specialized training and much practice.

(See Figure 2, which presents a summary of the roles and behaviors of the IHES facilitator.)

Fundamentals of Facilitation

You may notice that the IHES model of facilitation is more structured and directive than are other similar models. The reason is that you are being trained specifically to help out with task-oriented problem-solving groups. Following this prescribed

Figure 2

THE IHES FACILITATOR

- IS REPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING IHES GROUP PROCESS ..... BY PLANNING A TASK-PROCESS AGENDA FOR EACH MEETING
  - .....BY CLARIFYING IDEAS, SYNTHESIZING IDEAS, AND SUMMARIZING GROUP WORK AND DECISIONS
  - .....BY SUGGESTING ALTERNATIVE METHODS AND PROCEDURES
  - .....BY PACING THE GROUP
- IS NONEVALUATIVE AND NEUTRAL ..... BY CREATING A CLIMATE WHERE ALL CAN PARTICIPATE AND FEEL FREE FROM CENSURE
  - .....BY NOT CONTRIBUTING CONTENT IDEAS
- IS TASK ORIENTED .....BY FOCUSING GROUP'S ATTENTION ON THE TASK
  - .....BY NOT TALKING TOO MUCH
  - .....BY USING PROBLEM-SOLVING TECHNIQUES
- MODELS VALUES OF COLLABORATION AND CONSENSUS ..... BY USING CONSENSUS METHODS OF DECISION MAKING
  - .....BY OBTAINING THE GROUP'S AGREEMENT ON THE PROCEDURES YOU USE
  - .....BY MAINTAINING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND COMPLIMENTING THE GROUP ON ITS WORK
  - .....BY SUPPORTING THE WORK OF THE RECORDER
- EDUCATES THE GROUP IN IHES PROCESS.....BY DEFINING YOUR ROLE AND EXPLAINING THE OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES OF THE METHODS AND PROCEDURES USED IN THE GROUP'S PROCESS

format enhances the productivity and efficiency of the problem-solving process. You are advised not to take liberties with the process until you feel that you have thoroughly mastered this method and have used it with a number of groups; that is, until you can present a solid rationale for any modifications you may wish to make. The four phases of the IHES facilitation process are presented as follows:

Phase One: Preparing for the Meeting

- *Step 1.* Generally, the invitation to facilitate a meeting will be offered by the person in charge—usually the principal or superintendent. Having agreed to help, you should then proceed to work collaboratively to set the agenda and to decide upon such logistics as time frames and meeting facilities. It is also important that the principal feels confident and informed about your role as a process facilitator so that he or she does not feel threatened by a potential loss of power. Remember to be cooperative, democratic, and so forth.
- *Step 2.* The principal can help you immeasurably by providing background on the problem and the membership of the group. Plan to spend some time interviewing him or her about the situation, including such matters as:
  a. How the problem developed
  b. What other attempts have been made to deal with it
  c. What some of the root issues or hidden agendas are if perceived
  d. How this group was formed
  e. What the criteria for membership are
  f. What the goals of the group are as currently perceived by the membership
- *Step 3.* The more you know about a group before you begin the session, the better able you will be to prepare yourself to meet the group's needs and expectations. If the problem is based at a particular school site, you might want to visit there in

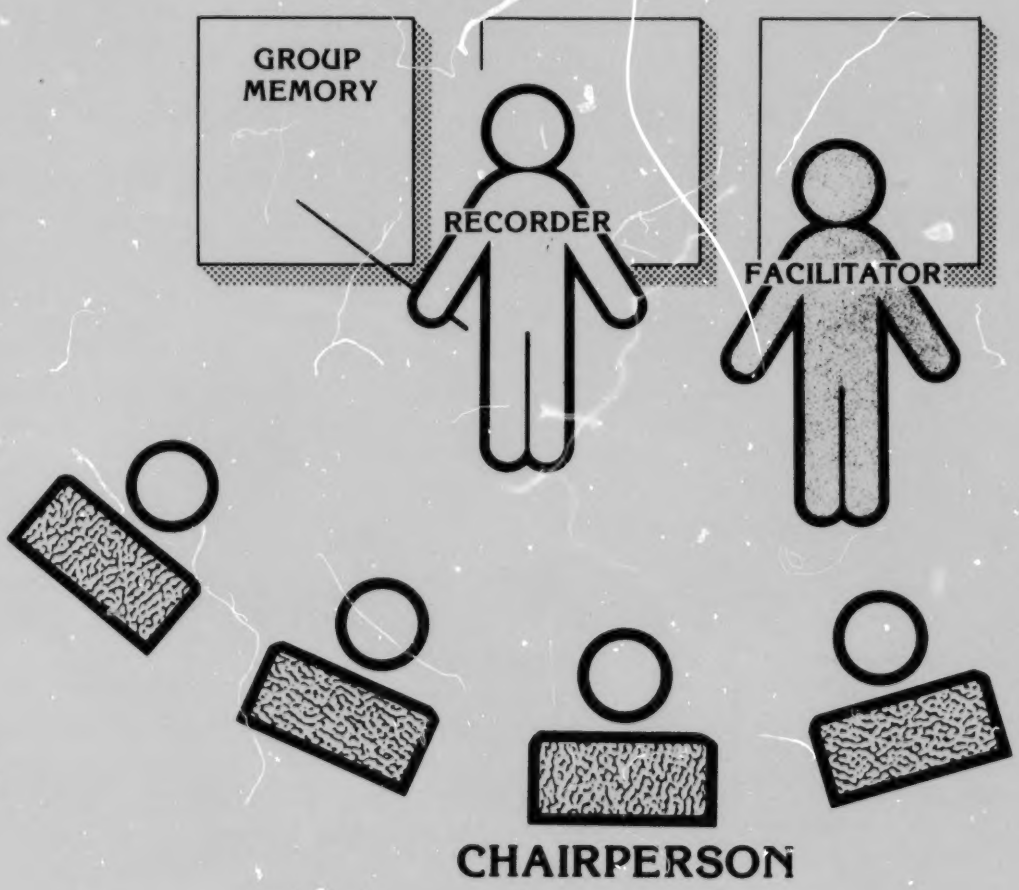
advance. However, do not gossip with others involved before the meeting. It is your job to maintain your objectivity and neutrality. To do so will be extremely difficult if you allow everybody to influence you in advance.

- *Step 4.* Finally, prior to the meeting, assemble your materials and prepare the room. For the IHES method of meeting facilitation, you will need to arrange an appropriate number of chairs in a semicircle near enough to a wall where the group memory can be displayed, as shown in Figure 3. Arranging the group in a semicircle is the best way to get a group to focus on a task while also maintaining contact with each other. Obviously, too, it is the best way for you, the facilitator, to maintain control in the group. A few more hints on preparing the room are as follows:

  a. Remove all tables or desks from the facilitation area. You will not want any physical obstacles between you and the group members.
  b. Try to provide chairs that are comfortable enough but not too comfortable. You do not want group members to lounge their way through the task.
  c. Arrange the semicircle so that it faces away from the door. In this way the group's work will not be interrupted by the inevitable coming and going of people.
  d. Choose a wall to face that is long enough and smooth enough on which to tape four to six pieces of butcher paper. Try using a movable chalkboard or partition for this purpose if wall space is inadequate.
  e. Use only as many chairs as there are participants. Any empty chair is a barrier to communication and an energy drain in the group.
  f. Make sure there are sufficient quantities of butcher paper, felt-tip markers, and masking tape.

Figure 3

IHES METHOD OF MEETING FACILITATION



Phase Two: Introductions

- *Step 1.* As the group members arrive, notice their mood and observe their interactions. Do they mix freely with each other? If they are talking to each other, what are they talking about? Observations like these will give you necessary clues about how well people will work with each other.
- *Step 2.* The principal or chairperson of the meeting should introduce you, giving the group members the relevant background on how you came to be involved and what your role will be in the group's problem-solving process. This procedure accomplishes the transfer of the job of running the meeting to you while allowing the chairperson to be still in charge. It also provides the sanction of authority for this method. You should then introduce yourself, presenting the "credentials" that justify your presence. To put the group members at ease, let them get to know you as a person as well as an expert so that they will perceive you as accessible to them. A little humor always helps.
- *Step 3.* You should then have the group members introduce themselves individually. Even if some group members know each other fairly well, this is a good way to loosen up. It is very important that you know everyone's name. Therefore, name tags should be used, even if only one or two people are newcomers to the group. And, of course, wear a name tag yourself.
- *Step 4.* Next, you should describe briefly the format of the meeting, explaining the purpose of the IHES facilitation method if this is the first time the group has utilized the process. Focus on the fact that this is a tried-and-proven method for solving a variety of institutional and educational problems and for enabling broad participation by everyone in a task-oriented context. There is no need to expound on the method beyond this because you will only confuse the group. Remind the group members that they will learn more about the method as they go

along and that you will be happy to answer questions about the process later. You should also specify the time frame for the session, including breaks, ending time, and so on.

- *Step 5.* As part of this orientation, you should now introduce the recorder, who will describe the purpose of the group memory and how it will be developed. (See the information on the recorder presented further on in this chapter.) If it is not possible to have a recorder trained in the IHES method present and one must be selected from the group, you should explain the role of the recorder and the group memory.

Phase Three: Facilitating the Work of the Group

- *Step 1.* The first crucial step in this phase of meeting facilitation is to state in question form the problem that the group is to address. If the purpose of the meeting is to develop an agenda for action, you might state the question as follows: "What are the problems, issues, and concerns related to our school human environment?" If, however, the group has been formed to address a particular problem, the question should be posed according to the degree of specificity of the problem. For example, you might ask: (a) "How can we increase parent involvement in the school program?" or (b) "What steps can be taken to decrease the level of vandalism at our school?" If the agenda of the group is preset, the question should be arrived at in advance in collaboration with the principal or chairperson of the group. In any case the question should be posed as clearly as possible, even though the issues to be addressed may be wide-ranging or even vague. It is good to remind the group that you are aware that there may be many other pressing issues of importance but that at this time you will be focusing only on the stated question. The recorder should then write the question in bold letters on top of the first sheet of paper so that every member can see it and think about it for a few moments.

- *Step 2.* You will then proceed to elicit the group's ideas according to the selected problem-solving methods described in the next chapter. Generally, you will begin with some form of brainstorming because that method allows for the free flow of ideas. Your job here is to encourage and reward participation, accept and record each contribution, maintain focus on the task, and protect the group from domination by any member. Specific techniques in this process are as follows:
  a. Let ideas flow as spontaneously as possible. Notice who wishes to speak and call on each person in order. It is helpful to acknowledge the lineup, saying, "First George, then Martha, then Virginia." In this way individuals will know they have been recognized and will not consume their energy waiting to get your attention.
  b. Help the recorder by restating the idea or paraphrasing it if necessary. Check to make sure the idea is recorded accurately.
  c. Move around the interior of the semicircle as each member speaks, thereby encouraging the contributor to focus his or her thoughts and increasing your own attention to the ideas presented.
  d. Remain neutral. Never let your own judgments or your own thoughts enter into the process. You must accept every idea, no matter how you feel about it personally.
  e. Remind the group, if some members begin to disagree with or criticize another member's ideas, that the task at hand is to generate as many ideas or alternatives as possible without evaluating them. Let the group know also that there will be a time later on when the ideas presented can be analyzed.
  f. Stimulate the group to make positive, creative contributions. If one member wants to complain or criticize, try to state and record that person's comments as positive ideas.

g. Educate the group in the IHES method. By reminding everyone about the ground rules of participation and the purpose of facilitation, you can usually forestall occasional attacks on the process or on other group members.

h. Keep the group energized and focused by attending to the pace of the group. Try to keep the contributions short and flowing so that the group does not get bored or restless.

i. Reorient the group to the current task if issues unrelated to the stated problem should arise. If the side issues seem especially significant, have the recorder write them down on a separate piece of paper, place the paper off to the side, and tell the group that you will return to the side issues when the current task is completed.

j. Learn to anticipate the probable next steps, using break times to prepare for these transitions so that group time will not be wasted.

k. When the group appears to have expended its energy on the particular exercise—in other words, when you feel the ideas are running out—have the group observe one minute of silence to review what appears on the group memory and to see whether anything should be added.

Finally, and most important, the facilitator must master the problem-solving sequence and the problem-solving methods described in Chapter 4. Knowing and being able to use these tools will enable you to proceed to completion of the task in the most productive and efficient manner. These are the tools of your trade and are what makes the difference between an amateur and professional facilitator.

Phase Four: Achieving Closure

- *Step 1.* At the end of each session, the facilitator should summarize the work of the group during that period. You should mention where the group started, what it accomplished, and where it ended.

In addition, you should recall any side issues that were raised and tabled for later discussion.

- *Step 2.* Finally, you should plan for the future. To do so may include restating specific actions that the group agreed to take in the course of its work and discussing and coordinating the scheduling of future meetings and the agendas for those sessions. If there is homework the group members need to do in the meantime, such as rank-ordering certain items, they should be reminded of that task. This step is usually accomplished in collaboration with the chairperson of the group.

Summary of Phases and Steps in the IHES Facilitation Process

Phase I. Preparing for the Meeting

Step 1. Collaborate with the chairperson on meeting purposes and logistics.
Step 2. Become educated about the problem.
Step 3. Become educated about the group.
Step 4. Assemble materials and prepare the room.

Phase II: Introductions

Step 1. Notice the mood of the group.
Step 2. Be introduced and introduce yourself.
Step 3. Have group introduce itself.
Step 4. Introduce IHES method and the format of the meeting.
Step 5. Introduce the recorder.

Phase III: Facilitating the Work of the Group

Step 1. State the problem in question form.
Step 2. Begin the problem-solving process.

Phase IV: Achieving Closure

Step 1. Summarize the progress of the session.
Step 2. Plan future action.

Role and Responsibilities of the Recorder

The role of the recorder is to create a *group memory* by writing down what is said during a meeting on large sheets of paper posted in full view of all the participants. During a discussion, being able to see what points have been made helps to focus the group energy on the task and enables each individual to analyze and build on previous contributions. It is also helpful for groups that meet on a regular basis to refer to past discussions and decisions.

Like the facilitator, the recorder must play a *neutral, nonevaluative* role in the group, thus supporting the work of the facilitator. Because the job of recording can influence how the group perceives what it is doing and where it is going, it is important that the recorder accurately represent the individual and collective contributions of the group, regardless of whether these contributions conform to his or her own opinions or beliefs. Creation of an accurate common record of the group's work will help greatly in the facilitation process because it fosters listening and the acceptance of the ideas of others by all the group members and is useful later in organizing these ideas for problem solving.

Whenever possible, the recorder should use the exact words of the contributor and, for this reason, must practice excellent listening skills, as described in Chapter 2. When an idea is too lengthy to record verbatim, then the recorder must assist the contributor and the facilitator in synthesizing and paraphrasing the expressed thought (see Chapter 2). For example, the recorder might ask the contributor, "Can you think of a shorter way of saying that?" If that question does not produce a recordable comment, then the recorder (in collaboration with the facilitator) might suggest a paraphrase by asking the contributor, "Does this accurately represent your idea?"

Because the IHES problem-solving process requires individual and group ownership of the problem, it is

extremely important that each member feel that his or her ideas are a valuable contribution to the work of the group. Even when an idea is complex or confusing, it is worth the time of the group to clarify and summarize each contribution. The major responsibility for coming to that agreement falls on the recorder because he or she is the guardian of the visual record. Of course, it is also each participant's responsibility to ensure that his or her ideas are represented accurately.

In general, it is recommended that each group be staffed with two persons trained in the IHES meeting facilitation method. Then one can help the other, thereby providing better service to the group. One can perform as facilitator and the other as recorder because having a skilled person in the role of recorder can relieve the primary facilitator. Team facilitation also allows for the two persons to switch roles, thereby giving each person a break from particular tasks while providing the group with a broader perspective of its own process. When it is not possible to have a trained recorder, the facilitator should ask someone from the group to perform that function. The facilitator should then spend some time explaining the recorder's role and responsibilities and should make sure as the meeting progresses that the group memory is being developed appropriately.

Duties of the Recorder

The duties that a recorder is expected to perform are listed as follows:

1. The recorder needs to make sure that sufficient quantities of paper—either large pads of newsprint or rolls of butcher paper—are available for the work of the session. There should be at least eight to ten pieces of paper for a two-hour meeting.
2. The recorder should stand in front of the group, positioned somewhat behind and to the side of the facilitator, as shown in Figure 3. The paper should be tacked or taped on the wall in clear view of the group. If an easel is used, each sheet

should be removed as it is filled and placed in order on the wall.

3. The recorder needs to be skillful at organizing material in a visual form. He or she should label each sheet appropriately and write clearly and largely enough so that each member can read it. Enough space should be left between each idea so that each stands out distinctly. Do not be afraid to use as much space as is needed to make the record clear.
4. The recorder should have at least two each of three different-colored wide-nibbed felt-tip markers. These should be fresh and new because the markers dry out rapidly, especially when writing is done on a vertical surface.
5. The recorder should write each group member's idea or contribution in a color different from the two preceding it. It is best, for example, to follow a fixed sequence, such as red-blue-green, red-blue-green, and so on. In this way each idea can be clearly distinguished without reference to whoever contributed it. Ideas are never identified by their individual author as they might be in the minutes of a traditional leader-led meeting. Rather, they become the work of the group as a whole. That is what is meant by *group memory*.
6. As the work of the group progresses, the facilitator will often return to the lists of ideas that appear on the sheets and guide the group toward consolidating some of the ideas. Although it is everyone's responsibility to achieve consensus, the recorder must be especially careful not to eliminate or alter any idea without the express permission of the contributor.
7. If comments or suggestions are offered that are outside of the immediate task of the group, the recorder may note these on a sheet of paper for later reference.
8. At the conclusion of the session, the recorder should number each sheet, remove the sheets, and roll them up for the next session.

Chapter 4

Problem-Solving Concepts and Methods

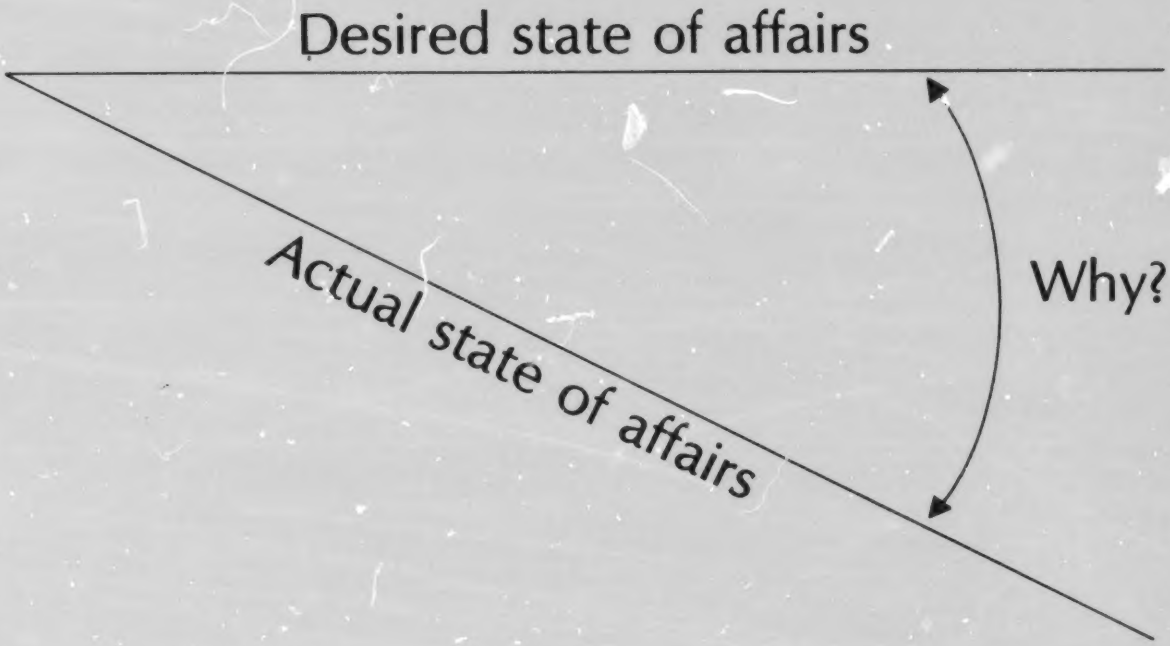
As an IHES facilitator your primary goal is to assist your group in accomplishing its task in a systematic way. Because IHES groups are conducted according to a collaborative decision-making and problem-solving model, you need to understand the concept of consensus and the problem-solving sequence to be helpful to your group, regardless of the content of the group's work. In addition, various techniques and methods are available for assisting groups in reaching consensus and in moving efficiently through the process of problem solving. As a good facilitator you need to know when and how to use them. In this chapter background information on problem conceptualization, consensus, and the problem-solving sequence is provided. In addition, frequently used techniques and methods for working with an IHES group are described and illustrated.

What Is a Problem?

A problem may be defined as a discrepancy between the way things are and the way one would like them to be. The goal of problem solving is to find ways to reduce the discrepancy between these two points, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4

WHEN IS THERE A PROBLEM?



Most persons view problems negatively. They assume that having problems reflects an inadequacy or deficiency within an individual, a group, or a social system. In contrast, within the IHES model problems are viewed as presenting opportunities for change, for growth, and for improvement. Problems can also be identified in areas in which some things are being done quite effectively but in which a person wants to have an even greater impact. A view of problems as discrepancies to be reduced and as areas to be worked on, as opposed to depressing situations that appear difficult or impossible to handle, makes problems amenable to intervention and control. This approach to problems makes having them acceptable and leads naturally to a positive and constructive approach to addressing them.

As a facilitator you can create an atmosphere in which group members feel free to express their perceptions of problems realistically and candidly, without being made to feel that they are being disloyal, negative, or excessively critical for having revealed them. You do so by telling your group about problems as perceived and about how this approach represents the first step in beginning to do something collectively and cooperatively about them.

The other advantage of viewing problems as discrepancies between the way things are and the way one would like them to be is that this approach enables a group to have a goal, a clear sense of where it will be if its interventions are successful. Sometimes you as facilitator will have to assist your group in formulating a realistic or attainable goal. If a group is addressing a vandalism problem, for example, it might ideally want to have no broken windows. Regardless of the effectiveness of its interventions, however, some windows will be broken for reasons beyond the control of the IHES group or the school. A realistic goal would be to reduce the number of broken windows.

Similarly, you assist the group in formulating several in-process check points or subgoals against which to measure the progress of its interventions. Because

many if not most human environment problems can be affected only after a considerable amount of time has passed, a group could become discouraged if its realistic goal is perceived as too distant. Achieving subgoals enables a group to monitor its progress as well as experience pride in accomplishment at various points along the way. Because human environment problems often require multiple interventions in a variety of arenas or with various groups in the school community, the establishment of subgoals for each intervention helps a group to assess its impact on the larger problem.

Problems are like people; they come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Like the forms of conflict discussed in Chapter 2, human problems can be expressed at five different levels: (1) intrapersonal; (2) interpersonal; (3) intragroup; (4) intergroup; and (5) organizational. Most school-related problems addressed by an IHES group involve some combination of these five levels. Human environment problems typically reflect some underlying conflict—in perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and/or behavior (see also Chapter 2). As a facilitator you may find it useful to classify in your own mind people's perceptions of problems and to listen for where the possible sources of conflict might be as an aid in your understanding of what the group is discussing. In addition, the levels at which problems are expressed can be used to assist a group in the following:

1. Determining the extent to which a problem exists and obtaining a greater awareness of its complexity or magnitude.
2. Focusing on one level if a problem appears to be manifested most seriously there or if it appears that that level is most amenable to intervention.
3. Minimizing conflict when the group appears to agree that a larger problem exists but is having difficulty in agreeing on the specifics of how the problem is expressed or where to begin. The use of the five levels allows all expressions to be

heard and recorded, often leading to a natural decision about what is most important.

Consensus

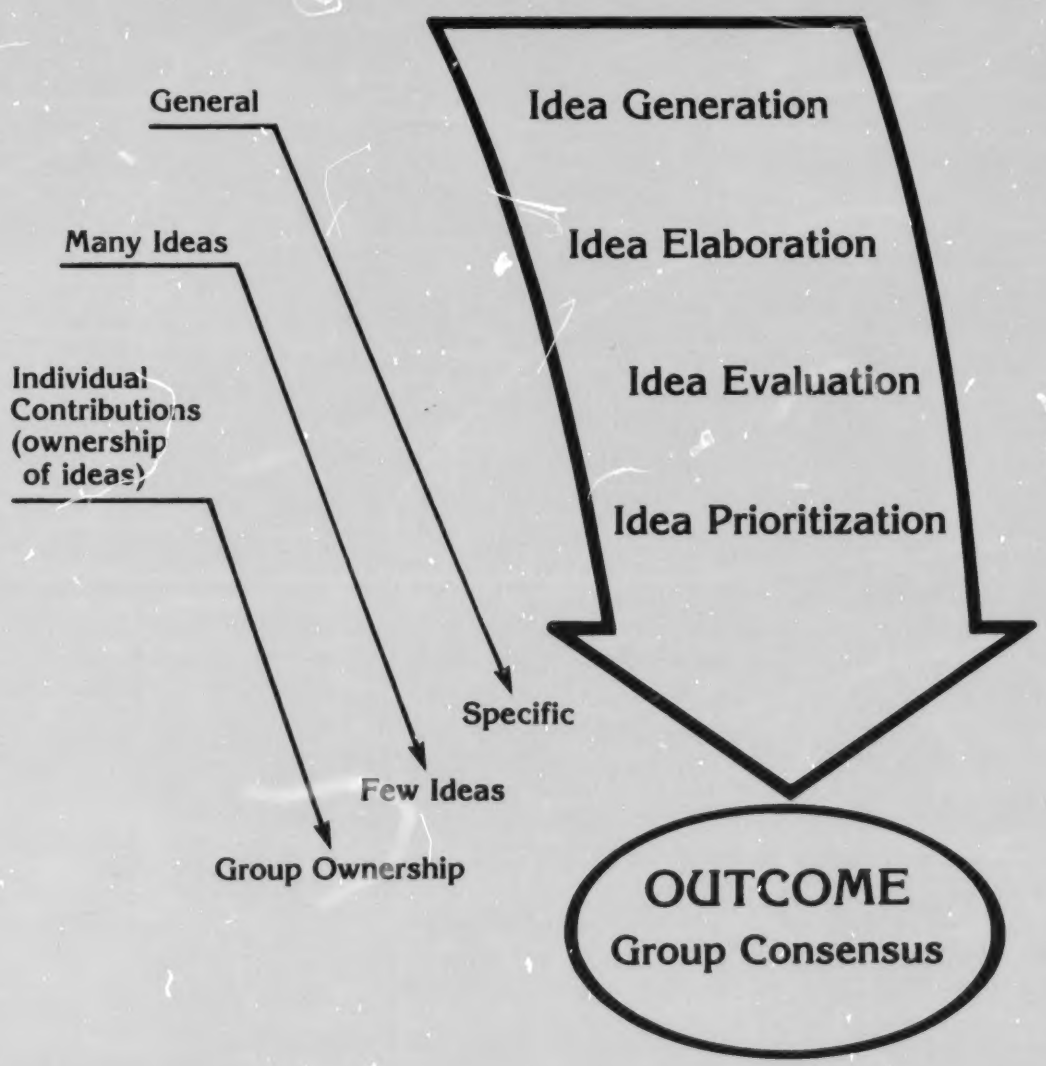
Consensus means general agreement. In the IHES group process, you as the facilitator seek to obtain the agreement of all members on all group decisions, whether related to content or process. Agreement is actually a continuum ranging from "I enthusiastically support" to "I am willing to go with the group's decision, even though I have some reservations." The purpose of obtaining group consensus is to increase every member's ownership of the decision and to establish a firmer sense of a group's life or identity separate from the individual member. Each time a group reaches consensus, it increases its identity and cohesiveness and feels rewarded for reaching closure.

Methods for reaching consensus usually make use of prioritization. In essence this approach involves assessing the relative merits of various ideas and then ranking them in terms of some criterion, such as importance. Establishing group priorities enables a group to say "now" to one idea, "next" to another, "later" to a third, and "much later" to still another. As you can see, this approach is quite different from taking a vote, an approach that tends to divide a group into winners and losers. The "win-win" group climate that is created when the group decides "not now . . . later" to some ideas is much more conducive to continued high involvement of individual group members than the "win-lose" group climate that is created when the group decides "not now . . . never" to some ideas.

As shown in Figure 5, the outcome of group consensus is the result of a process that enables the IHES group to accomplish important tasks in terms of its content as well as its own process. From the standpoint of the group's content, ideas are generated (or shared and recorded on the group memory), elaborated or expanded, evaluated, and, finally,

Figure 5

SEQUENCE OF GROUP PROCESS WITHIN PROBLEM-SOLVING STEPS



prioritized. From a process standpoint the group moves from general to specific ideas, from having many ideas to having a few ideas, and, most important, from individual contributions of ideas to group ownership of ideas. How to assist your group in reaching consensus is described further on in this chapter.

Finally, the concept of consensus is based on the values of cooperation and compromise. In conducting the IHES group, you contribute to creating a group climate suitable for collaborative decision making by modeling these values in action. This is the teaching role of the facilitator because many people may not have had the opportunity to work together in this way before. Because most persons prefer to work in such an atmosphere, in contrast to one characterized by intragroup conflict and competition, IHES group members are usually very supportive of consensus values.

Problem-Solving Sequence

The problem-solving sequence involves seven steps:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Analyze the problem.
3. Generate multiple solutions.
4. Develop a plan for action.
5. Determine the consequences of the action plan.
6. Implement the plan.
7. Evaluate the action or actions taken.

A group functions optimally in terms of its process as well as the quality of its content when it moves through the sequence in order, giving focused attention to each step in turn. Because most persons are eager to find solutions to problems, sometimes even before agreement is reached on what the problems are, they often need your assistance in following the steps in a careful, systematic way. As mentioned in Chapter 3, you must educate the group about the problem-solving sequence, describe briefly the benefits of following it, and initiate the first step competently so that the

group can see, in practice, the validity of your opening remarks.

Step One: Identify the Problem

The first step in the problem-solving sequence is the most important as well as the most time-consuming. Generally, the group begins by asking the question, "What are the problems, issues, and concerns in our school human environment?" Your goal is to assist the group in identifying one problem statement that everyone in the group agrees at some level to work on. What the group identifies and defines as a problem can have many alternative problem statements that in large measure determine what the group will or will not do to solve the problem. As stated previously, agreement on a common problem ensures group ownership and strong individual participation as the problem-solving sequence progresses.

To identify and reach agreement on the problem, the group needs to:

1. Brainstorm perceptions of problems.
2. Elaborate on the problem statements: Who? What? Where? When?
3. Determine whether the problem statements reflect actual problems.
4. Assess the relative importance of the problems.
5. Reach consensus on the problem to be addressed first.

You can contribute to the quality and quantity of the group's work in Step One by:

1. Informing group members of the importance of spending time on problem identification and definition.
2. Encouraging group members to generate multiple problem statements and to refine their definitions of the problem as the group progresses.
3. Pointing out the difference between symptom statements and problem statements. Symptom statements are usually very specific and describe one aspect of what is actually a larger problem.

Encouraging problem statements is more helpful at this stage.

4. Assisting individuals in stating problems behaviorally to the extent that they can rather than attitudinally. Problem statements that reflect what people do are easier to work with later than are those that do not involve action verbs.

Step Two: Analyze the Problem

The second step in the problem-solving sequence provides the groundwork for generating quality solutions. More important, it establishes a common level of information and understanding among group members about what the nature of the problem is and how it is manifested. During this phase various aspects of the problem are elaborated, and the group agrees on which are most important. Step Two involves some of the same elements as Step One except that now you are working with only one problem, and the level of understanding about it is what you are seeking to deepen. When analyzing a problem, consider the following:

1. Make sure that the problem statement is worded clearly and that the meanings of all terms are made clear to all members by:
   a. Asking the group whether the posted problem statement is clear and recording any modifications
   b. Obtaining definitions of terms that are not clear and recording them
2. Examine the causes of the problem by:
   a. Brainstorming and recording all perceptions on the group memory under the heading "Why Does the Problem Exist?" or "Causes of the Problem."
   b. Conducting an advocacy and prioritization of the most important causes to address
   c. Restating the problem in terms of the most important cause

3. Elaborate in some detail on the behavioral manifestations of the problem to help the group understand how and where the problem is evidenced. This task can be achieved through brainstorming and recording all perceptions on the group memory under the heading "How This Problem Is Expressed." There is no need to prioritize this list because it is intended for information only.
4. Conduct a force-field analysis, examining the current problem in its context to understand what factors are working to improve the situation and what factors are working to make the situation worse.

To assist the group in analyzing its problem, you as the facilitator need to decide which of these approaches would be most useful to the group. The group does not need to do all of these things; in fact, one or at most two will suffice. However, items 1 and 2 are the most frequently used approaches. To assess usefulness, you should ask yourself:

1. What is the current level of information and awareness about this problem in the group?
2. What information would be most helpful for the group to have when it begins to work on solutions?

If the group's problem is general, such as differential treatment of students, a behavioral or causal analysis (or both) is most useful. If the group's problem appears complex and has several causes, such as the use of drugs by students, a causal analysis can help the group to determine which causes are most important to address first. If the group's problem appears to be specific, such as the occurrence of fighting among student groups on school grounds, then a force-field analysis is most effective. If the group's problem is one about which a number of members appear to have little awareness or information about how it is expressed, a behavioral analysis is appropriate.

Step Three: Generate Multiple Solutions

At Step Three the IHES group brainstorms solutions to the identified problem. First, you must restate the problem in a solution framework. That is, you must change it into a question, such as, "What can we do to reduce the incidence of vandalism at our school?" Or you might develop a "how to" statement, such as "how to improve relations among students of different racial and ethnic groups at our school."

In general, your role as facilitator is to:

1. Encourage all ideas for solutions to be expressed without evaluation by others.
2. Encourage group members to think creatively by expressing new and different as well as obvious solutions. In other words, encourage the group to open the field of possible alternatives.
3. Encourage greater specificity in solutions by letting group members provide as much information as they can about what they have in mind.

What the group did in Step Two to analyze the problem shapes what it will do in Step Three:

1. If the group did a *causal analysis*...
   Then solutions would be tied to how to alleviate, eliminate, or change the nature of each of the prioritized causes so that the original problem might be affected.
2. If the group did a *behavioral analysis*...
   Then solutions would be tied to the original problem and the statement would be restated in terms of a solution.
3. If the group did a *force-field analysis*...
   Then solutions would be tied to finding specific ways to strengthen forces affecting the problem positively and to weaken forces affecting the problem negatively.

After solutions have been generated and evaluated, once again a prioritization method is used to achieve consensus on either the solutions the group wants to work on first or the best solution.

Step Four: Develop a Plan for Action

The group's objectives in Step Four are to elaborate on the solutions selected in Step Three and to develop specific action plans. Questions such as the following are answered:

1. What is to be accomplished?
2. What is to be included in the process or action?
3. Who is to be involved?
4. What resources will be needed?
5. What is the time frame?
6. What will be the indicators of the plan's effectiveness?

In the discussion of these questions, a matrix analysis, as described later in this chapter, aids the group in considering various options and in seeing the options portrayed graphically on the group memory. If more than one solution is to be worked through, the entire group can work on all of them; or the group can be divided into smaller groups, each group working on one solution. Results can be shared with the entire group after a work period.

The last question (What will be the indicators of the plan's effectiveness?) is the beginning of the development of an evaluation plan; therefore, it should be saved for last or after the solution has been worked through. At this point you can assist the group in setting realistic goals and understanding that there are process goals as well as outcome goals to consider when indicators are being defined. Process goals are achieved in the course of moving toward outcome goals. For example, the establishment of a schoolwide committee to review the school's current discipline policy and procedures is a process goal that will eventually affect the outcome goal of reducing fighting between student groups—the original problem.

Step Five: Determine the Consequences of the Action Plan

This is the evaluation, modification, and reformulation phase of planning. Your responsibility is to assist the group in evaluating its own plan and

obtaining feedback from others who will be affected by the plan. Ask the group, "What are the barriers to implementing our plan?" After the barriers have been identified, paper is posted next to the list of barriers, and the group brainstorms on how to overcome them. This modified force-field analysis enables the group to develop miniplans within the overall plan.

Next, the group identifies target groups or individuals who will be affected by the plan or who will be expected to carry out some parts of it. It decides who will seek feedback from these groups and individuals. At the next IHES group meeting, these comments are shared, and the original plans are modified accordingly.

Step Six: Implement the Plan

Now that the IHES group has an action plan, it takes steps to ensure that the plan will be carried out. The IHES group may assume responsibility for coordinating the implementation by others, or it may do some of the implementation itself. In most cases the IHES group coordinates the activities, with individual members assuming responsibility for doing specific things or for getting others to do things.

Your role in Step Six is to assist the group in determining the answers to certain questions:

1. What needs to be done?
2. By whom should it be done?
3. By what date should it be completed?

Step Seven: Evaluate the Action(s) Taken

As stated earlier in Step Four, the group needs to evaluate the effectiveness of its plan as well as its progress in solving the problem during and after implementation. Ongoing, in-process evaluation is essential to achieving the desired results and having an impact on the problem. If interventions are not achieving the desired results, they should be changed. Encourage your group to make revisions in its action plan if data suggest that to do so would be beneficial. Once implementation has been completed and it is

time to assess the impact on the problem, encourage the group to decide whether it should continue what it is doing, modify what it is doing, or stop what it is doing. To make this determination, the group returns to the original problem and assesses whether the problem has been solved or affected.

Some guidelines you may wish to keep in mind and to share with the group in Step Seven are as follows:

1. Change does not always occur in places where change is expected. Encourage your group to think broadly about how and where evidence of change can be expressed.
2. Change is a slow process. Because change takes time, encourage your group not to evaluate, judge, or scrap its plans before the plans have had time to affect the school environment.
3. Changes in problem areas are rarely measured accurately by standard instruments. Encourage your group to choose and develop appropriate methods for assessing the impact of their plans.

Selection of Strategies

The problem-solving sequence provides you with a general structure for addressing human environment issues, concerns, and problems. Many opportunities also exist for you to exercise judgment in how the group will conduct its work within each step. In essence you need to conceptualize the group's problem area so that you can make good choices in selecting methods and techniques appropriate to the group's task. Here is where having a cofacilitator serving as recorder is particularly useful. Discuss your options with your cofacilitator and obtain comments on your process agenda. Two heads are especially better than one at these choice points. Until you have extensive experience in working with a variety of groups on a variety of problems, plan to consult with your cofacilitator before initiating the next step. This practice will increase your confidence as a facilitator

and will help to ensure the probability of success in your chosen strategy.

Occasionally, you may find that something you have asked the group to do is not working or is not helpful in the way you intended. If so, look to why this situation has occurred and what might work better. Try to bring that activity quickly but naturally to closure rather than to an abrupt stop and move on to what you have decided would be a more productive direction for the group.

Techniques

Providing members with a brief, straightforward explanation of a technique and its usefulness as a tool at a given point in the IHES group process achieves several purposes:

- It enables the group to focus attention on the content or task.
- It establishes the expectation for how group members are to contribute.
- It gives the group direction and establishes the parameters of its discussion.

Explanations of techniques become less frequent and less necessary as the group moves through the problem-solving sequence because members come to know the methods, too. Your life as a facilitator becomes easier as the group becomes increasingly familiar with the IHES facilitation model and more competent at functioning productively within it.

Your introduction of a technique should include an explanation of:

- What the technique is
- How the technique can be useful
- What the process is
- What group members are to do

In this section five techniques and methods that are indispensable to your work as a facilitator are described: brainstorming, advocacy, consensus methods, force-field analysis, and matrix analysis.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a method of obtaining many ideas from a group in a short period of time. In the course of the problem-solving sequence, it is particularly useful when the group is in Step One—problem identification; in Step Two—analysis (behavioral or causal); and in Step Three—generation of alternative solutions. Brainstorming permits the free flow of ideas in the group, places no value judgment on the ideas, and communicates to group members that their ideas are important.

The process of brainstorming takes place as follows:

1. *Inform the group that it will be brainstorming:* Say: "In brainstorming, we want to get as many ideas as we can about the problems, issues, and concerns related to the human environment in our school."
2. *Tell the group the rules:* Say: "At this point we will only be listing ideas, not evaluating them. One person will have the floor at a time, and I will recognize people who wish to speak in turn. Do you have any questions before we begin?"
3. *Establish a general time frame for the activity:* Tell the group: "OK. For the next 20 minutes, let's see how many ideas we can come up with."
4. *Conduct the brainstorming.* In monitoring the brainstorming process, notice the flow of ideas. When the flow slows down or when items are being repeated, the group is approaching task completion. When ideas are repeated, the recorder places an asterisk (*) next to the item. If ideas are still flowing when the suggested time frame has passed, say: "Let's take another 15 minutes here because it appears that we have more ideas to share."
5. *Bring the activity to closure.*. To reach closure, tell the group: "It looks as if we are ready to review our list and see if there's anything else we wish to add before moving on to determining which ideas we want to work on first. Take a minute

now to review the list, and then I'll check with each of you, in turn, to see if there's anything you wish to add." After the minute has passed, ask each member in the semicircle, moving from left to right, whether there is anything he or she wishes to add. The brainstorming activity has been completed now, and no new items are added to the group memory for this round of problem solving. The product of brainstorming is a list of ideas.

Advocacy

Advocacy is a method for selecting a few ideas from a long list of ideas, for evaluating the relative merits of ideas in terms of some criteria, and for moving the group into a decision-making frame of mind. Advocacy enables group members with a strong opinion to be heard and to convince others of their point of view. It enables group members with opinions not as well defined to hear arguments and to obtain more information about certain ideas. Advocacy focuses on highlighting the merits of certain ideas as opposed to focusing on the lack of merit of other ideas. In this way the evaluation of ideas becomes a constructive process because group members are encouraged to focus their thinking on the positive aspects. The procedure for conducting an advocacy period is as follows:

1. *Inform the group members that they will be advocating:* Say: "In advocacy we seek to determine which ideas are most important (or which ideas we want to work on first). Each person who advocates or 'speaks to' an idea will have one minute to present his or her reasons for why that idea is most important. Because we will be making some decisions after we complete the advocacy period, you should do your best to present convincing arguments for your point of view."
2. *Tell the group the rules:* Say: "In advocacy, each person who wishes to speak has one minute to

do so. A person may advocate only one idea; however, the same idea can be advocated by more than one person. A group member also may choose not to advocate. We will be working only with ideas that have been advocated in the next step and putting aside unadvocated items, although the other ideas will be retained on the group memory for future rounds of problem solving. Take a minute now to look over the list and decide what you think is the most important idea. Are there any questions before we begin?"

3. *Conduct the advocacy.* In conducting the advocacy, make sure that you (or the recorder) have identified the idea being advocated on the group memory before the group member begins advocating. The recorder puts a large asterisk (*) next to the item or circles it, indicating that the idea has been advocated. Time each advocacy or have the recorder do so. When 60 seconds pass, say: "Thank you. Your time is up. Does anyone else wish to advocate?"
4. *Bring the advocacy period to closure.* Closure is reached when each group member has advocated an item or when no remaining group members wish to advocate. The product of advocacy is a shorter list of ideas that have been identified as meritorious by at least one group member.

Consensus Methods

There are a number of ways to assist a group in reaching a decision by consensus. First, all involve some method of making a long list shorter and more manageable. Second, all involve some method of prioritizing, by ranking, the items on the shorter list. Remember that the underlying principle of consensus is to achieve an outcome that is reasonably agreeable to all group members and to avoid at all cost a sense of losing out on the part of any group member.

Advocacy is the consensus method found most effective for the first step, but there are other methods involving combining and grouping. Although these

methods are more time-consuming and more difficult to execute than advocacy, they have the advantage of consolidating similar ideas so that people have fewer items to work with. For your information two methods, one for combining and one for grouping, are described briefly as preadvocacy steps or as alternatives to advocacy.

In *combining*, the group is asked to review the ideas under discussion to determine whether any can be combined. As suggestions are offered, ask the entire group: "Are there any objections? If so, you don't need to state your reasons. If any member objects to the combination, the ideas will remain separate." This statement is repeated until all suggested combinations are addressed. The group then moves to the next procedure if the list is still quite long.

In *grouping*, the objective is to create new lists of similar or related items that are retitled to reflect the category describing the newly grouped items. A pair of scissors can be used to cut up the items and to save recopying and scratching out as items are moved from one place to another. Another method is to use a letter of the alphabet to code the category and the items that fall into it. After all items have been coded, cut up the items and repost them under the new headings. These headings become the short list and are then ranked.

Experience has shown that grouping can be time-consuming and unsettling to the group because disagreement often occurs as to the best groupings and placement of items. An advocacy procedure, preceded by combining if you wish, usually achieves the same outcome more efficiently.

The second step in reaching a consensus is to prioritize or rank the items or some of the items according to a prescribed method. The simplest method for prioritizing is first to pass out small slips of paper to each group member and to letter (A, B, C, and so on) each item on the short list. On a piece of butcher paper, have the recorder write "3 points = most important problem (or most important place to

begin)"; "2 points = second most important problem"; "1 point = third most important problem"; and the instruction: "Write the letter of the problem next to each point value on your sheet of paper." Then tell the group members to review the items and to choose what they feel is the most important problem. Tell them to write the number 3 next to the letter identifying that problem on their piece of paper. Have them do the same for 2 and 1. Collect the papers and tally on a posted piece of butcher paper. The item with the highest number of points becomes the top priority, and the others follow in relative importance according to their respective tallies. Inform the group that this will now become the agenda; the prioritized problems will be addressed in order.

There are more elaborate methods of prioritizing that are perhaps more accurate; however, they are more time-consuming and often difficult to explain clearly to the group. For your information several sources on alternative prioritization methods are included in the supplementary reading list at the end of this manual.

Force-Field Analysis

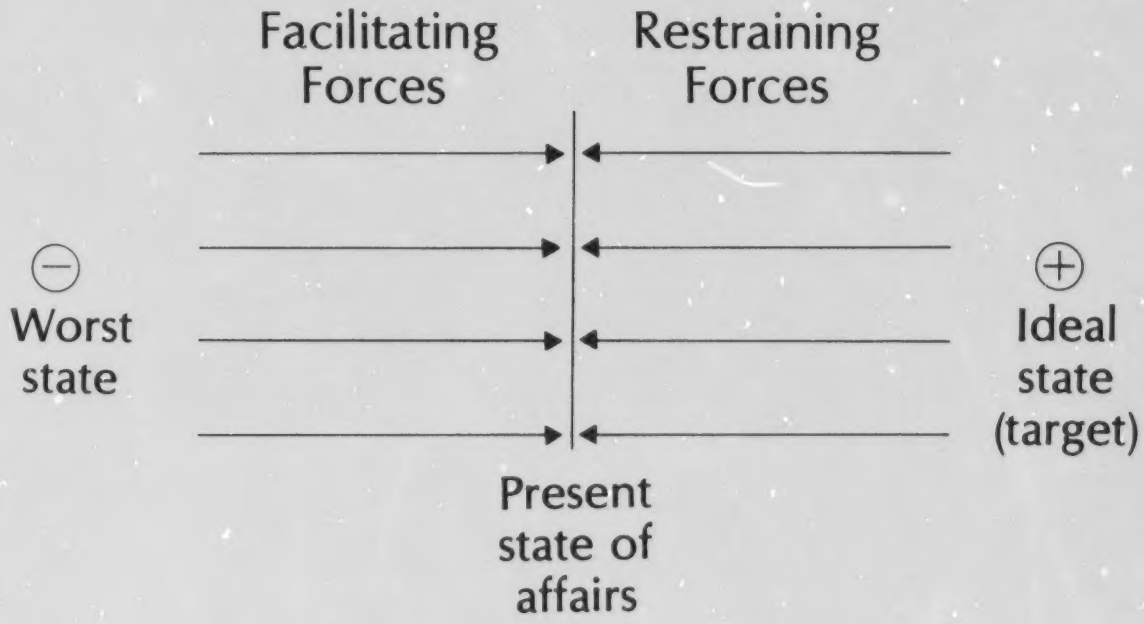
Force-field analysis is a technique for analyzing a problem in the situation or context in which the problem now exists. Its purpose is to inventory positive factors in the environment (facilitative forces) and negative factors in the environment (restraining forces) that currently affect the problem. This analysis increases the group's level of information about the problem, helps group members identify their resources as well as their challenges, and provides a structure for future planning. Thus, it is particularly useful in Step Two and Step Three of the problem-solving sequence. Before you initiate a force-field analysis, however, you should prepare the group memory as shown in Figure 6.

The process for conducting a force-field analysis is as follows:

1. *Inform group members that they will be doing a force-field analysis:* Say: "Next, we will analyze the

Figure 6

FORCE-FIELD ANALYSIS



problem we've decided to work on in terms of the facilitating and restraining forces that maintain the problem as it is right now. For any problem there are people and conditions that, basically, are working to change the problem for better of worse. The forces for positive change are facilitating (point to group memory). If left unchecked by restraining forces, our problems would improve (move hand to the right of the present state of affairs), and we would approach the ideal problem solution. On the other hand, the forces for negative change (point to restraining forces), if left unchecked, would make the problem (move hand to the left) become worse than it currently is. Our task is to identify what these forces are so that we can later, when we consider solutions, find ways to strengthen the positive forces for change and weaken the negative ones."

2. *Tell the group the rules:* Say: "You may contribute either facilitating or restraining forces, but be sure to say first in which category your idea falls. We will not be evaluating ideas now but rather simply listing them. Are there any questions?"
3. *Conduct the force-field analysis.* Notice the flow and distribution of ideas. If most are restraining, encourage the group to add to the facilitative list. Otherwise, follow the same procedures as for brainstorming.
4. *Bring the activity to closure.* Closure is reached when all ideas have been posted. If the analysis is to be used for future planning, the group completes the process by (a) identifying the forces that are amenable to change or intervention and eliminating the others; (b) deciding the most important forces to strengthen and to weaken; and (c) then deciding how to strengthen and weaken the forces. The analysis can be an aid in future planning without completing the above procedure. The group simply can be encouraged to use the information gained as they work on generating solutions to the problem.

Matrix Analysis

A matrix analysis provides a graphic presentation of ideas for comparative evaluation or planning. Conducting a matrix analysis enables you to assist the group in (1) evaluating the relative merits and feasibility of selected solutions of plans; (2) working through a number of options or variations of one solution; or (3) planning implementation of selected solutions. It is most useful for number 2 or number 3. A sample matrix analysis is shown in Figure 7. On the vertical lines to the left, the alternatives to be considered are listed. On the top horizontal line are listed the criteria to be addressed. The group establishes the criteria with your assistance. New criteria can be added as they are identified, even if the analysis has begun.

The process for conducting the matrix analysis is similar to brainstorming in that ideas are not evaluated until all are presented, but the process is somewhat less formal and structured. The group is encouraged to build on the ideas already presented. If an expansion or modification of a posted idea is offered, check with the original presenter. If the modification is satisfactory to that person, it should be recorded as the new idea; if it is not satisfactory, record the option next to the original idea for evaluation later. The group can be encouraged first to work through its ideal solution and then to scale that down in terms of the realities of staffing, financing, time, and so on. This is a suggested use for matrix analysis that enables the group to retain the integrity of its original solution through a variety of options. For example, if the preferred way of increasing student activities, the chosen solution, is to hire an activities director and there are no district funds to do so, the group's plan might be (a) to examine alternative ways to raise the funds for an activity director; or (b) to move to the second level plan of establishing a parent-student activity program. A matrix analysis helps the group to determine the what and how of solutions and to see that there are more ways than one to achieve its objectives.

Figure 7

MATRIX ANALYSIS

	Resources Needed				
Alternatives	People	Supplies, Equipment	Time	Space	Financial
a					
b					
c					
d					
e					

Sample IHES Process

These techniques can be used singly or in combination on the basis of your judgment about the best way to assist the group in its movement through the problem-solving sequence. A sample of how the techniques can be used at various points is provided in Figure 8 for the first steps of the sequence.

Figure 8

Sample IHES Process and Techniques

Step	What?	How?	Example
1. Identify problems.	1. Obtain list of problems. 2. Reach consensus on the first problem to be addressed.	1. Brainstorming 2. Advocacy Elimination Prioritization	"What are the problems, issues, and concerns related to our school human environment?" "The most important problem is student vandalism."
2. Analyze problems.	1. Examine causes. 2. Reach consensus on causes to be addressed. 3. Restate and clarify problem.	1. Brainstorming 2. Advocacy Elimination Prioritization	"What are the causes of vandalism at our school?" "Students' lack of pride in the school contributes to the problem of vandalism."
3. Generate solutions.	1. Restate problem to generate solutions. 2. List solutions. 3. Reach consensus.	1. Write out and post in front of group. 2. Brainstorming 3. Advocacy Elimination Prioritization	"How to increase school pride in students in order to impact the problem of vandalism" Top three solutions: 1. Establish a School Pride Day. 2. Develop an incentive program in which funds not used to repair damage are given to student activities. 3. Improve security in the evening and on weekends.
4. Develop plans.	Develop the specifics of the solution and alternatives for carrying it out.	Matrix analysis	For the first solution the group decided to recommend that a faculty-student government committee be established to plan the day, scheduled to take place one month from now. It would involve all students in various projects designed to clean up and then "decorate" the school.

Chapter 5

Maintaining an Effective IHES Group

Now that you have learned the skills of the facilitator and perhaps have facilitated your first IHES meeting, you are ready to learn more about small-group processes and methods to facilitate the development of the IHES group. Groups are like individuals, each with unique personalities and each presenting different challenges to those who work with them. Just as individuals move through stages of development, so do groups—in ways that are predictable and observable.

In this chapter the concepts that underlie the IHES group process are discussed so that you can keep them in mind whenever you facilitate. Next, the cycles in a group's life are presented so that you can be aware at all times which cycle your group is in. Finally, some ideas are offered on how you can maintain a rewarding and productive group experience for all involved, including you, the facilitator.

IHES Group Process

As discussed in Chapter 4 and elsewhere, the IHES group is a task-oriented, problem-solving group based on collaborative decision making and consensus. It is not a counseling or therapy group in which the focus is placed on individual change or on interactions

within the group. The focus in the IHES group is on the problem-solving task. As the facilitator you become expert in communication skills so that ineffective or counterproductive communications can be eliminated and a high level of problem resolution can be facilitated.

In any group, optimal functioning occurs when there is *access* to participation as well as *efficiency* in the group's process of problem solving (Napier and Gershenfeld, 1981). Although this makes intuitive sense, it is much easier to understand than to implement. We know from research on groups that the more open the avenues of participation, the higher the perceived morale of the group's members. Thus, as facilitators we should encourage all individuals to participate by creating an atmosphere characterized by respect and dignity. On the other hand, groups that emphasize openness tend not to be very efficient. They tend to generate extraneous material or waste a considerable amount of time listening to the more outspoken group members develop their opinions. In addition, more time is often needed to identify the best ideas, in part, because more content is generated and more ideas of varying quality are produced.

Highly efficient groups have a central person who expedites, clarifies, and keeps the group on task. As facilitators you will develop process agendas designed to move a group through a planned, structured problem-solving process. On the other hand, an overemphasis on task completion may generate resistance in some participants, make people feel undervalued, and discourage careful thinking because participants feel rushed or are unable to match their personal style of making contributions to the process. As a result, divergent or creative thinking may be limited and lower-quality or safer ideas selected 'not because the best solutions have been attained but because a desire to complete the task quickly has become the primary objective.

Achieving balance between access to participation and efficiency is your goal as an IHES facilitator.

Balance is achieved when group members appear to be fully participating and when their participation is structured to maximize the group's forward movement in the problem-solving process.

As used here, balance does not mean that at all times one must give equal emphasis to both factors. Rather, it means that the facilitator is always sensitive to both process and task and uses good judgment and flexibility in giving appropriate attention to both aspects over the course of the group's life. For example, periods of brainstorming and advocacy are times to emphasize open and free communication in a time frame long enough for all to make contributions. On the other hand, when some group members offer extraneous material for discussion to postpone decision making, it is appropriate to post the new topics on a new sheet of butcher paper to the side of the group memory for future consideration. In this way the group's attention can be focused on the next important step in the problem-solving process.

Good judgment in knowing when peripheral issues must be dealt with because of their impact on future process and task completion, as well as when they can be saved for later or not addressed formally at all, is developed by analyzing your past facilitation experiences and observing others facilitate. As a general rule, when you as facilitator feel that the negative conditions of the most open group are beginning to surface in the IHES group, it is your responsibility to (1) impose restrictions of time or content on discussions; (2) resort to rules; or (3) move the group to the next step of the problem-solving process.

Life Cycles of a Group

The cycles in a group's life can be conceptualized within either a process framework or a task framework. Both are useful to know about because they provide you with some indicators for analyzing what you see occurring within your IHES group. Within both frameworks the stages of development are rarely as

well differentiated as they are described here. Further, they may not always appear in a clear, step-by-step progression; groups have a way of moving forward and backward and then forward again. This is the element of excitement and unpredictability in groups that provides the facilitator with new challenges.

Process Framework

Regardless of their type, groups usually progress through (1) an initial stage; (2) a transitional stage; (3) a working stage; and (4) a final stage (Corey and Corey, 1982). An IHES group is no exception.

- *Initial stage.* In the initial stage the most important tasks for the facilitator are to establish trust, goals, and norms and procedures for the group. When people enter a group for the first time, as discussed in Chapter 3, they may feel insecurity, anxiety, apprehension, and uncertainty about their own behavior and about what others might expect of them. By creating a climate of respect and by modeling comfortable yet purposeful behavior, you as facilitator begin the process of trust building in the group. Your invitations for active participation help here also and contribute to the emergent sense of cohesiveness that will be solidified in the working stage. As the facilitator you initially establish the standards that govern individual behavior in the group and propose the procedures to be followed. A gentle approach that still reflects your authority as facilitator is always best. Be sure to obtain the consent of the group for your procedures. Questions should be carefully and sensitively addressed. Remember that you can always say: "Well, let's give it a try for now. . . . We can always decide to do it in a different way later."
- *Transitional stage.* The transitional state is less well defined in time than the first but is usually identified by the expression of conflict or by the observation of problem behaviors in individual group members. The conflict may surface between group

members or may be reflected in challenges directed to the facilitator. The transitional stage is characterized by some anxiety and usually precedes an individual group member's commitment to the purposes of the group. If problem behaviors in individual members surface, you should rely on assertive communications and other strategies described in Chapter 2 and Chapter 6. If you observe group resistance to moving forward, you need to analyze it and address it; otherwise, the group will become fragmented and will be unable to move into the working stage. If the group's resistance is passive, the situation is usually perceived as unsafe by the members. Assurances and words of encouragement are helpful. Of course, you need to make sure that anxiety is not coloring your observations before you confront an individual or the group.

Most of the time the behaviors and conflicts that evidence themselves in the transitional stage of an IHES group are subtle and low-level. They may naturally pass without any intervention by you, or they may be managed so easily that you need not be too concerned with them. The key is to address problems or conflicts as they surface, before they escalate, with the lowest levels of intervention first. Being too sensitive to potential problems usually translates into overreaction on the part of the facilitator, possibly alienating you from the group and creating a "them against me" stance incompatible with the facilitative function you are there to perform.

- *Working stage.* The working stage is characterized by cohesiveness and productivity. Morale and mutual trust among members are high. In general, interpersonal conflict has been managed, and constructive conflict around differences of opinion is effectively dealt with as it surfaces. This is where, as facilitator, you see both open communication and task orientation operating at a high level.

Groups are not static, however, and it is in the working stage that the ebb and flow of group energy are clearly visible. It is an extended period characterized by high productivity interspersed with periods of stagnation or little movement. There are miniclosures on issues and new beginnings as new cycles of problem-solving are begun. As facilitator you know the members of your group quite well by now, and they have come to adopt for themselves a set of norms and procedures that work for them under your able leadership. Do not panic if you have a poor meeting. Remember that people who work hard need to rest and that groups do, too. Rather, analyze what happened at the meeting—what you could have done differently (if anything) as well as what they could have done differently (if anything). Consider also the possibility that group energy was at an ebb because of circumstances beyond everyone's control.

- *Final stage.* The final stage occurs when the IHES group dissolves or ends. If it appears that imminent closure is desirable, inevitable, or necessary, do not let members drift off without a formal ending or closure experience. The IHES group has worked together for some time now and has established itself as an entity. Plan to assist the group in processing its ending. Included might be a review of its work and accomplishments as well as some formal and informal rewards to the group and to individuals for their time and effort.

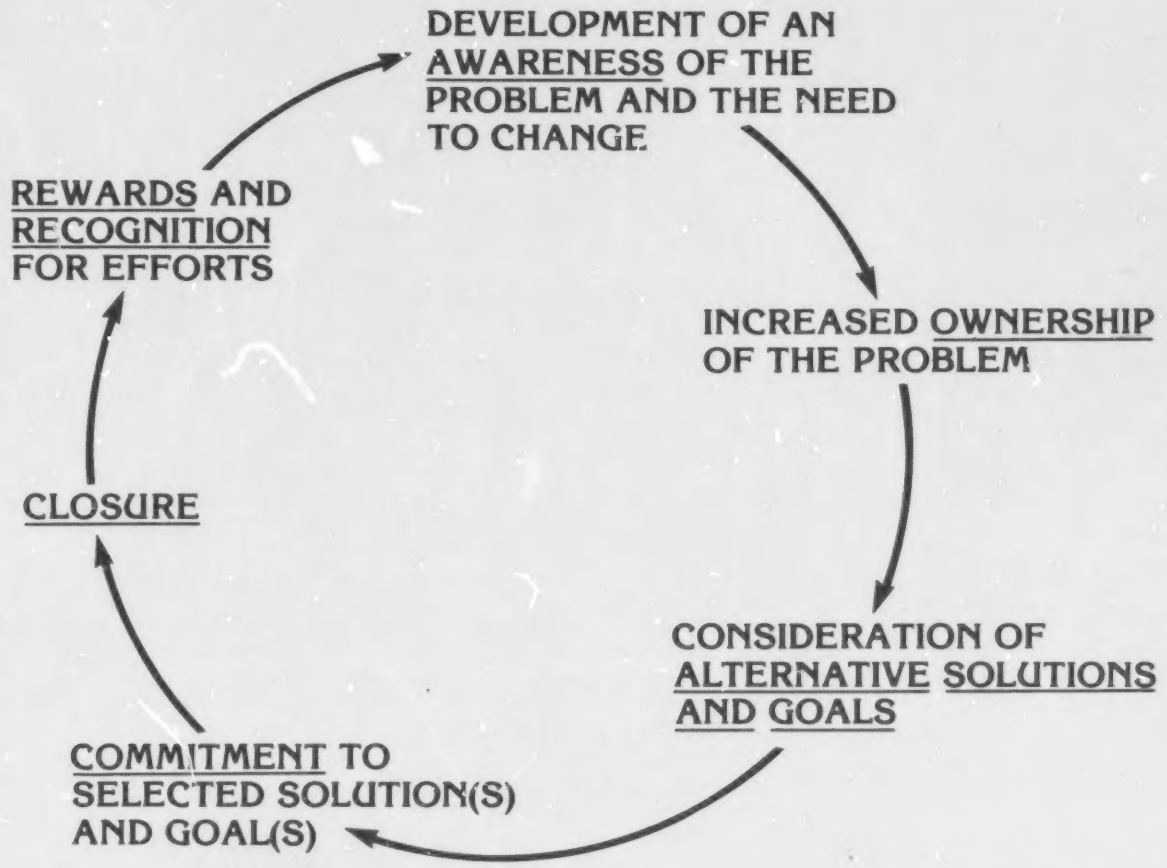
Task Framework

The Hetzel and Barnard (1973) model of group process, adapted and expanded for our use, provides another way of conceptualizing the IHES group process. As shown in Figure 9, it provides a gauge for where the group should be developmentally as it moves through the problem-solving sequence described in Chapter 4.

- *Awareness.* In the first stage, group members develop an awareness of the problems, issues, and

Figure 9

IHES GROUP PROCESS


DEVELOPMENT OF AN AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM AND THE NEED TO CHANGE
INCREASED OWNERSHIP OF THE PROBLEM
CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS AND GOALS
COMMITMENT TO SELECTED SOLUTION(S) AND GOAL(S)
CLOSURE
REWARDS AND RECOGNITION FOR EFFORTS

Adapted from Hetzel and Barnard, The Human Agenda: Critical Variable in Innovation.

concerns affecting the human environment of the school. This awareness parallels Step One—problem identification in the problem-solving sequence. During this early period, awareness is primarily affective in nature, with participants sharing their perceptions and feelings about what the problems are. Later, in the analysis phase, awareness is deepened through the presentation of data, advocacies, and other more cognitively based activities.

Developing awareness is an individual and variable process. Some group members, because of position, experience, or interests, will have greater awareness of a stated problem than will other group members. In the awareness stage *all* group members come to recognize that at least one individual perceives that a problem exists in a given area. Your task here is to facilitate the expression of all members' perceptions and to treat each as worthy of being recorded on the group memory. You may need to remind group members who seek to dismiss the ideas of others or to deny another person's perception of a problem that now is not the time for evaluating or judging the relative merits of the ideas being generated. Tell the members that evaluation and judgments will come later.

- *Ownership.* During the ownership stage group members come to identify with a need for change. They move from the perception of problems as external to themselves or institutional in nature to the realization that they as individuals have a personal commitment to contribute to the solution of problems. Ownership is facilitated by the group's first efforts at decision making. Usually, ownership of the problem is achieved through a consensus-reaching procedure, such as a prioritization of the most important issues. From this point forward the group is working on its own self-generated agenda, and the most important issues belong to the group, not just to the individuals who originally

contributed the issues to the group memory.

As the group analyzes and refines the definition of the problem area it has chosen to work on first, awareness and ownership are deepened. In esssence, the more you know about the probable causes of the problem, the manner in which the problem is being manifested behaviorally and specifically, and the context in which the problem is expressed, the more able you are to see the need for addressing it and for committing yourself to that effort.

During the analysis phase, two behavioral patterns may surface in terms of the group's process. First, you may notice some group members expressing the feeling that they feel overwhelmed, discouraged, or pessimistic because the problem seems "too big," "too complex," or "beyond solution." The positive aspect of these expressions is that you know that their awareness has indeed increased. It is natural for these feelings to surface after an intensive period of analysis, and you need to tell the group this. You should also assure them that they will, indeed, be able to do something about the problem. If the problem seems too big or too complex to you also, perhaps the group needs to identify smaller, specific subproblems under the larger problem and to attack each subproblem separately.

The second pattern that may surface is that group members may be offering solutions when they are supposed to be analyzing. If this situation occurs early in analysis, you need to inform the group members that solutions will be worked on later. Early education of the group on the relationship of problem identification and analysis to the quality of solutions helps to prevent this natural tendency for people to want to reach a solution to a problem before they fully understand the problem. Sometimes a participant's solution comment can be translated into a causal statement. The statement "We need

more security guards" can be restated and recorded as "There are not enough security guards." Finally, the movement to solution statements may be an indicator that the group has completed the analysis and is indeed ready to move on to the next stage.

- *Alternative solutions and goals.* The third stage, consideration of alternative solutions and goals, parallels Step Three—generation of solutions in the problem-solving sequence. As the facilitator you should create an open atmosphere in which participants are encouraged to offer a variety of solutions: the obvious, the easy, the difficult, and the creative. It is helpful to ask members to be as specific as possible about what they have in mind when they suggest solutions. To do so makes the next step easier, more meaningful, and more clearly defined.
- *Commitment.* Developing commitment to the selected solutions and goals is similar to the ownership stage in that the techniques of advocacy and prioritization are often used to reach consensus. As stated in Chapter 4, consensus means agreement, and agreement facilitates commitment. Again, since this is a decision-making phase, there may be some anxiety or resistance surfacing in the group. However, because the selection of solutions means movement to the development of action plans, the positive aspects usually outweigh any negative ones. When this stage has been completed, most group members tend to feel considerable responsibility for achieving the desired solution(s).
- *Closure.* The next step, achieving closure on the group's task, is difficult if not impossible to accomplish if closure is defined as the elimination or immediate resolution of a problem. Human environment problems are rarely amenable to these forms of closure. In an IHES group, closure may mean (1) having taken as many steps as possible to implement plans; (2) forwarding recommendations to various groups for reactions or actions; or (3)

developing time lines and a monitoring system for assessing the impact of a solution. In all cases the group feels that it has finished its work, at least temporarily, or has gone as far as it can with a given solution or a particular problem. If the closure phase has gone well, the group will have a feeling that it can make a difference and that its effort has been worthwhile. After a rest it will be willing to begin the problem-solving process again.

- *Rewards and recognition.* The final stage of the process is rewards and recognition for efforts. Probably the most powerful reinforcement for a group is task completion. Although this intrinsic reinforcement occurs naturally, other ways exist to recognize a group for its work, such as the presentation of awards by the principal or publicity in the news media. In your role as facilitator, you should feel free to suggest to those in authority opportunities or ways in which to reward the group.

Motivation of an IHES Group

There are many ways for you, the facilitator, to assist your group in maintaining its motivation and productivity. In general, people are motivated and feel rewarded through (1) respect; (2) recognition; (3) a sense of self-importance; (4) a sense of belonging; (5) responsibility; (6) status; (7) pride in accomplishment; (8) task completion; (9) knowledge of results; and (10) praise.

As an exercise designed to sensitize you to the many ways in which motivation and reward can be translated into specific things that you or others can do at various points in the life of your IHES group, see whether you can brainstorm at least five different things to do for each of the ten items. Consider building in various motivators and rewards in your opening and closing remarks at each group meeting. Assist your group in defining its own rewards. Remember that appropriately timed breaks, opportunities for informal socializing, the sharing of

food, respect for ending times for meetings, and the preparation of process agendas that permit a group to have closure on a phase of the problem-solving process are all contributing factors to a positive group experience. Giving a pep talk that praises the group for the quality of its work or reminds the group members of their important function can also go a long way.

In the long term two important principles guide your work as a facilitator. Both are central to the IHES concept, and both have been demonstrated to be positive reinforcers of behavior. The first is that participatory decision making is superior to other approaches for addressing human environment issues that affect the school community. The second is that positive and constructive group management leads to positive and constructive problem solving. Your IHES group will come to know and appreciate these principles as a result of your work as a facilitator. This is *your* reward.

Chapter 6

Advanced Facilitation

Once you have facilitated several IHES group meetings and have found that to do so was not as easy as you thought it would be, you may be ready to study this chapter. Discussed here are basic correctives for problems that facilitators may encounter as well as some advanced facilitation skills. The specific topics covered include the physical environment, the shaping and pacing of the group's work, difficult group members, and the qualities of a good facilitator.

Physical Environment

When, despite your best efforts, a group does not progress very well, look first for problems in the physical environment. For example, the room in which you are meeting may have the wrong shape or size to accommodate a single semicircle. If the group meets in a room that is too small or narrow, some group members may be too far from the action. Try, therefore, to schedule your meetings in a large multipurpose room or even a classroom because these rooms tend to have appropriate dimensions and large wall spaces. Meeting rooms tend to be poor locations for IHES meetings because they are generally too small

for this kind of work and are usually furnished with large tables that will have to be removed.

If you are assigned to a small room with large tables, do not be pressured into holding the meeting around the table. Because the IHES facilitation process requires the openness of the semicircle and the focus on you and the group memory, a table will be a distinct hindrance. Either change rooms or move the table out. In fact, it is a good idea to arrive at the assigned meeting place a half-hour beforehand so that, if necessary, you can move the furniture around.

In arranging the room, make sure that there are only enough chairs for the number of group members. If fewer than that number attend, remove the empty chairs and tighten the circle. Gaps can become symbolically and functionally a hindrance to the group's process. It is also a good idea to remove other chairs from the perimeter of the semicircle because reluctant or tardy members will want to sit behind the rest of the group and will have to be coaxed to come forward.

In summary, you may avoid problems later if you will review the following set of questions before beginning your meeting:

1. Are the chairs arranged in a true semicircle?
2. Has unnecessary furniture been removed from the work area?
3. Is there plenty of empty wall space within the view of the group to post the group memory?
4. Is the lighting adequate?
5. Has the group memory from the previous meetings been posted to bring everyone up to date?
6. Is there enough chart paper for this meeting? If you are using rolled butcher paper, have enough sheets been cut?
7. Is there a sufficient quantity of fresh markers and masking tape?
8. Are there enough name tags for everyone?

Shaping and Pacing

Being sensitive to the mood, energy level, and problem-solving capacities of a group and being able to address these with confidence is advanced facilitation indeed. Although the content of a group's work will be the product of the issues it chooses to work through, the process is up to you. Sometimes, certain phases of the process can be very positive by their very nature, such as at early stages of the group's life or during a brainstorming session; at other times group members will need help from you to keep them going through difficult or slow-moving tasks. It is at these times that your skill and enthusiasm as a facilitator is especially called upon to educate and challenge the group members and to provide them with a vision about their task.

This is what is meant by *shaping* the work of the group. As a facilitator you are responsible for focusing on the primary objectives and ultimate goal of the group; that is, producing high-quality solutions to difficult or sensitive problems. When the group gets bogged down in specifics or begins to lose its enthusiasm, it is your job to remind the group members of the stages of the group's process, as described in Chapter 5, and to put into perspective the purpose of the activity. In doing so, you may challenge them to increase their influence, improve the quality and depth of their analysis, and, finally, achieve their goals.

By *pacing* is meant that you try to maintain the highest possible energy level in the group by carefully selecting tasks and anticipating what is to come in the course of the work of the group. It also means learning to encourage the group when difficulties arise or when the group becomes immobilized. It means confronting the need for readjustment in the group and reinforcing the norm of positive and constructive problem solving. Finally, it means sharing your expectations while remaining flexible in your planning.

Suggestions for handling two common problems associated with shaping and pacing—nonparticipation or boredom and time limitations—are described here.

Nonparticipation or Boredom

When one or two members have ceased to pay attention and are perhaps beginning to engage in personal conversation, the person or persons may be bored or perhaps irritated. When a member is quietly staring out in space, you might choose to ignore him or her for the time being, allowing the person to take a mental break. If, however, this behavior continues for a long period of time, you should speak to that person privately during a break to ascertain whether there is a problem.

If someone's behavior is disruptive to the group as a whole, such as engaging in peripheral conversations, that person may be having difficulty with the group process itself. It is best to deal with the situation by asking the person directly whether he or she would like to make a comment and following that up with a private discussion, if necessary, during a break. What is important in this case is to reestablish order so that the group can proceed.

If the whole group or a substantial portion of it appears bored or is unwilling to participate, you should consider certain possibilities:

1. It may be time for a break—simply that. Often, beginning facilitators, in their fervor to move to closure, fail to notice the flagging energy level of the group. You should always plan breaks as needed. For example, if you are going to have to tally rankings before moving on, give the group a stretch break while you are doing so. You should also call for breaks whenever something significant disrupts the process of the group (including certain interpersonal interruptions, which will be discussed later) in order to relieve tension and allow for getting the group back on track. As a facilitator you will want to take breaks for yourself because, as you have probably discovered, this is

hard work. Use your own energy and stress levels as barometers for changing pace or resting for a while.

2. Group members may feel that progress toward the goal is not occurring and that what is happening is irrelevant. This situation can happen especially during problem analysis. Some group members can become impatient at this stage because what they are interested in is generating solutions. In this case your role is to remind the group about the purpose of this stage of the problem-solving process and to view it as an opportunity for all group members to air their thoughts on the problem so that the best solutions can be formulated in the next phase. It may also be, however, that the pace is just too slow. You might wish to quicken the pace and indicate to the group that you are about to conclude this phase and that they should prepare to make their final comments.
3. The discussion may have gone off the track, and you may be losing the group in irrelevant abstractions. Make sure that the group is still dealing with the concrete realities of the problem.
4. One or more persons may be dominating the group, and, as a result, the others may become bored or irritated. Remember that maximum participation, the goal of an IHES group, ought not to be jeopardized by an individual's need for recognition or group power. (See the section dealing with difficult group members further on in this chapter.)
5. Finally, it may be that people in the group are feeling inhibited by another group member or perhaps by you as facilitator. IHES groups typically include participants who may not be used to working in such a highly structured, task-oriented way. Nonparticipation may simply be the result of feeling overwhelmed by the process itself or by others who are verbose or opinionated. In this case you will need to repeat often the

importance of everyone's ideas, even ideas that may seem unclear or unformulated. You can also remind the group that you and the recorder are there to help the members express their thoughts, thus encouraging open communication.

Time Limitations

The most common problem you are likely to encounter is running out of time before you have reached closure on a particular phase of problem solving. This can occur even when you have carefully anticipated the direction of the group for that particular session because it is impossible to predict accurately the number or kind of ideas that a group will generate. Because one of the major principles of an IHES group is to make clear the expectations of its members, such as when meetings will begin and when they will end, a group should not be kept overtime to finish a task. Rather, it is suggested that you do the following:

1. Set reasonable time limits for each task planned and inform the group members of those limits so that they, too, can assume responsibility for reaching the goals of the meeting. Having the recorder keep track of the time can also help to keep the group within its time frame.
2. Remind the group when time limits are being exceeded. If it appears, as the meeting progresses, that you will run short of time, discuss alternatives with the group, such as extending the meeting or scheduling a later one.
3. Recognize when it is time to quit. If at all possible, try to end a particular session on a positive note. For example, if the group members have worked hard on a task and are basking in a sense of accomplishment, the meeting should be closed with much praise for all, regardless of the time or the projected agenda. It is not a good idea to overtax a group because of the negative effect on the group's efforts. To do so may impair the long-term enthusiasm and commitment of the

group to the IHES process. Besides, there is nothing wrong with letting everyone leave early.

In summary, a few general principles should help you to pace and shape the work of your group:

1. Remember that adequate preparation for the meeting is your best investment in promoting a productive and rewarding session.
2. Be able to anticipate problems before they become obstructive. This ability comes with experience.
3. Be flexible enough to alter your planned agenda if necessary.
4. Let the group know what to expect and what is expected of it at all times.
5. Stay relaxed and keep your sense of humor. A good laugh every now and then can lighten the atmosphere and relieve tensions before they build.

Problem Members

In almost every group there will likely be found one or two members who cause problems for the group, thus distracting you from moving toward completion of the task. In confronting these problems, you must strike a delicate balance between resolving the individual difficulty while trying to preserve the momentum of the group as a whole. You are also responsible for protecting members of the group from attack or domination by any individual.

Basic Strategies

Your overriding goal when handling these problems should be to get the group back on task with the least amount of disruption or time lost toward this end. General methods recommended for doing so are as follows:

1. Maintain your neutrality and composure. Try not to get upset.
2. Acknowledge the difficulty. Describe the person's behavior through observation without being judgmental.

3. Try to accept each person's form of expression as his or her attempt to communicate an important idea or feeling.
4. Appeal to the rules. Remember that there is a definite structure, such as one person talking at a time, to which everyone must adhere if the group is to function well.
5. Educate the group about the IHES process. Remind everyone that this is a task-oriented, problem-solving group with the goal of reaching consensus on issues, not of resolving personal or interpersonal problems.

Finally, in dealing with individual problems or disruptions, realize that the best strategy is to start with the least disruptive, lowest-level response and to escalate in a gradual or measured fashion from there, moving to more direct confrontation only if needed. For example, if someone is interrupting aggressively, start by reminding him or her about the rule of being recognized in turn. If this does not work, then move physically closer to the person, giving nonverbal signals to stop, such as eye contact or the gestures of a traffic officer. Remember not to point. Next, look the person directly in the eye and speak to the person, telling him or her to stop. If that attempt fails, call for a break and confront the person outside the meeting to find out what is wrong and attempt to solicit or negotiate cooperation. The last resort, one that will rarely be required if the previous steps have been taken, is to confront the person in front of the group by reminding him or her again about the purpose and rules of the meeting and asking the person to decide to comply or to discontinue participation.

Specific Interventions

The members you are likely to have difficulty with in an IHES group tend to fall into several categories. What follows is a description of the characteristics of some of these individuals and specific interventions for dealing with such persons:

■ *Angry or Hostile Member*

The angry or hostile member is probably the most difficult member you will have to deal with. It is important to remember that a person who is consistently angry or hostile has strong feelings and probably believes that arguing and browbeating and dominating others is the only way to be heard. Of course, this person may have psychological problems beyond your ability or responsibility to resolve. Nevertheless, it is within your ability and responsibility to attempt to gain his or her cooperation and conformity with the group's procedures. It is also important to the rest of the group that you meet any challenges to your authority and the rules of the IHES process effectively and fairly. If you allow the angry or hostile member to dominate the meeting, you will lose the respect required to lead the group toward its goals.

▶ *Specific interventions.* The first and most important thing to remember in dealing with the angry or hostile member is your skill in reflecting feelings, as described in Chapter 2. You should quickly acknowledge to the person that you are there to help translate these feelings into action-oriented plans. Do not ignore the feeling level of the person's expression because to do so tends only to escalate the anger. Defusing the angry feelings first will enable you to proceed with the general methods and strategies described earlier. Specifically, moving closer to such individuals will often make them more aware of their behavior, and dealing with them outside the meeting is necessary if the behavior persists.

■ *Attacking Member*

This person is different from the generally angry or hostile member in that he or she relieves frustration or anxiety through personal attacks on another group member or on you as facilitator. Remember that your overall duty is to protect the other members from criticism and abuse while refocusing on the task at hand.

▶ *Specific interventions.* Remind the attacker that the purpose of the meeting is to generate ideas and solutions and that personal attacks, because they do not serve this end, will not be tolerated. Use the group memory to refocus on the ideas and away from individuals. Ask the attacker whether he or she has something to contribute and have recorded and remind him or her that there is a time and method for evaluating ideas. Try to convert the attacker's criticism into a constructive contribution if he or she is unable to formulate an idea in a positive, nonpersonal manner. If two group members begin to quarrel, remind them of the rules and the task at hand and physically step between them, forcing them to talk to you rather than to each other. If you are being attacked, try not to be defensive. Take a deep breath, thank the person for the critcism, and say that you will consider it. Remind everyone that there are various styles of facilitation but that the methods are standard. Then proceed. If you feel a need to do so, speak to the attacker outside the meeting to describe the IHES process and your role in it more fully.

■ *Negative ("Yes, but . . .") Member*

The negative member is always looking for reasons why an idea will not work. This person can have an extremely deflating effect on a group's energy. Your general objective here will be to turn the negative comments into positive statements.

▶ *Specific interventions.* When the negative member starts to explain why something will not work, simply reply, "We don't know that what you say is true." Try to enumerate quickly those factors which are unknowns and challenge the person to keep an open mind until the process is completed. If you are in a brainstorming session, remind the person that the time for evaluating ideas will come later and that you are only trying to solicit as many ideas as possible. Then motion to the group memory and ask whether there is a constructive idea that he or

she would like to add. Always use your best skills to turn a negative remark into a positive one.

■ *Extremely Talkative Member*

This person is characterized by long-winded and repetitive discourses. Often, the extremely talkative member is passively (as opposed to aggressively, like the angry or hostile member) expressing a need to dominate the meeting, possibly for status or power. Nevertheless, he or she generally means well and can be a valuable member in the long run. Therefore, your approach should be appreciative and reassuring while focusing on the substance of the idea presented.

▶ *Specific interventions.* Learn to interrupt politely but firmly. Saying "Thank you" is always an acceptable stopper. Or stop the person in midstream, saying, "Let's hold on a minute to make sure we don't miss anything. Let's see if I've got your point." Then paraphrase. If the person agrees that what you have stated is at least partially correct, then have the recorder write the words down. Often, just knowing that one's ideas are being recorded causes the person to relax. Occasionally, however, the talkative member continues to act as before. If the person offers a different idea this time, try to have the person hold on to it until it is his or her turn again. If not, and if the person is obviously still very much involved with an idea or issue, remind the person that there will be a time for advocacy later, if that is in fact the case. Alternatively, acknowledge that the person seems to need to talk now and that, as a special exception, you will provide one minute to speak, allowing him or her to let go of the ideas and thus move along through the rest of the meeting. Remember that this last option involves differential (and preferential) treatment of one member and should only be used as a last resort when you judge that by doing otherwise you would lose the person or cause disruption.

■ *Extremely Quiet Member*

The extremely quiet member, unlike the bored or distracted nonparticipant described earlier, is generally a person who is shy or is overwhelmed by some other group member or the process itself. In IHES groups this person may be a student or parent who is unduly awed by teachers or administrators and who may need special encouragement to contribute.

▶ *Specific interventions.* Although you would generally not call on someone who has not asked to be recognized, in this case it is advisable to acknowledge the need for and value of the quiet member's contribution by asking him or her directly: "Is there something you would like to add?" If the person's remarks are very brief, you might ask: "Could you say more about that?" You can add a word or two of verbal reinforcement at the end of a person's comment, such as "Thank you." With this person you might also want to point to the group memory, as that can be very reinforcing of the contribution.

Although the persons described in this section are not the only difficult members you may encounter in an IHES group, they provide a few models from which you can improvise. The most important point to remember in dealing with difficult members is to remain neutral. Of course, you will have personal reactions and feelings, especially when someone is acting inappropriately or offensively. However, for the group to trust the IHES process and you as its guardian, it must firmly believe that your own ideas and feelings are not affecting the outcome of the group's work.

The best tactic for remaining neutral and relaxed is to resort to the rules. Repeating the rules and reminding the group of its overall purpose and function will better enable you to shape group consciousness and responsibility. It will also relieve you of the personal need you may feel to respond to each challenge on a personal level. If this approach

fails and you find that you must respond strongly to the negative or antagonistic behavior of a member, use a self-assertion mode rather than a defensive or aggressive mode. Tell the offending person in concrete terms what you see him or her doing, how that makes you feel, and what you would like him or her to do differently.

For additional descriptions of how to deal with difficult members of similar groups, see Doyle and Straus (1976), pp. 105—17; and Auvine and others (1978), pp. 59—72.

Qualities of a Good Facilitator

Corey and Corey (1982) have described the personal characteristics of the effective group leader as:

- *Courage*—to take risks, to be honest, and to admit one's mistakes
- *Willingness to model*—particularly as to openness, seriousness of purpose, acceptance, and risk taking
- *Presence*—in the sense of being emotionally and intellectually self-aware and prepared
- *Good will and caring*—being sincerely interested in the welfare of others and respecting, trusting, and valuing individuals
- *Belief in group process*—that it can produce constructive and significant outcomes, and conveying this belief to the members of the group
- *Openness*—to oneself, the group, new experiences, and different value systems and life-styles
- *Ability to cope with attacks*—as being able to look at criticism nondefensively
- *Personal power*—as having dynamic and vital qualities and self-confidence
- *Stamina*—both physical and psychological and an awareness of one's own energy level
- *Self-awareness*—or the ability to look carefully and critically at oneself
- *Sense of humor*—putting events in perspective and releasing tension
- *Inventiveness*—being spontaneously creative and not trapped in ritualized methods

Without belaboring each of these points in the abstract, we suggest that you consider them as embodying the general characteristics of the IHES facilitator, with one major exception. To be an effective and professional facilitator, you must be able to evaluate your own performance at the conclusion of each IHES meeting. Happily, the IHES model includes a recorder also trained in IHES facilitation methods with whom you can and should discuss the proceedings of the meeting, preferably at its conclusion. This feedback and review will improve your skills and techniques in facilitation immensely and will enable you to plan more effectively for the next session.

As an aid to self-evaluation, a questionnaire is provided with which to rate yourself on 20 key qualities of a well-facilitated meeting. It is strongly recommended that you complete this post-facilitation self-evaluation immediately after the session, using it as a basis for your discussion with the recorder. A perfect score would be 100, and a trained facilitator should score at least 80. Congratulate and reward yourself if you achieve 80 or better.

Post-Facilitation Self-Evaluation

Rate yourself from one to five on each of the qualities below:

	Poor				*Excellent*
1. Did I maintain a task orientation throughout the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
2. Did I maintain neutrality throughout the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
3. Did I educate the group about the process and agenda throughout the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
4. Did I achieve consensus in the process of the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
5. Did I use the appropriate problem-solving methods throughout the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
6. Was I able to elicit a high level of participation and energy throughout the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5

7. Was I able to elicit a high *quantity* of ideas during the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
8. Was I able to elicit a high *quality* of ideas during the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
9. Did I effectively collaborate with and support the recorder?	1	2	3	4	5
10. Is the group memory clear and complete?	1	2	3	4	5
11. Did I practice good active listening skills throughout the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
12. Did I model flexibility and openness throughout the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
13. Did I maintain self-awareness of my own energy level throughout the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
14. Did I maintain my sense of humor throughout the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
15. Did I handle conflict or disruptions effectively during the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
16. Did I feel relaxed and self-confident throughout the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
17. Did I arrange the physical facilities adequately for the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
18. Did I adhere to the time lines proposed throughout the meeting?	1	2	3	4	5
19 Did I reward the group appropriately for its work?	1	2	3	4	5
20. Did I plan the logistics for the next meeting with the consensus of the group?	1	2	3	4	5

Perfect score = 100

As a further aid in improving your facilitation skills, analyze the specific situations in the meeting that were problematic and ask yourself, "What could I do differently or more effectively in the future if similar circumstances occur?" Also, consult with your recorder to obtain his or her ideas. Remember that one option always available to you in a difficult situation in which you are uncertain how to proceed is to take a break and consult privately with your recorder on what to do next. If you feel unable to continue in the role of facilitator, consider switching roles with the recorder.

Facilitating a meeting can be a personally exhilarating experience. It presents you with new opportunities to learn and to refine your skills and enables you to participate in an exciting, creative process and to participate in an important social change effort. Despite the challenges that face you as a facilitator, the positive benefits and feelings that you will experience will make your efforts worth the challenge.

appendix

a postscript: Establishing an IHES Group

To use the facilitation skills you have just learned, you need an IHES group. Although it is not your responsibility to establish the group, administrators may seek your advice in composing it. Further, since the strength of an IHES group is based on how diverse and representative it is, you may need to be an advocate for these qualities at various points in the group's life. In this appendix information on the preconditions for a successful IHES group and on the philosophy of its composition is presented for your own use or for you to share with the principal of a school where you will be facilitating.

Preconditions for a Successful IHES Group

An essential factor in establishing an IHES group is the support of the chief administrator: the superintendent, the principal, or, (preferably), both. For an IHES group to be established, school district or site administrators must:

- Perceive that human relations or human environment issues and concerns are affecting negatively the quality of education offered in their school(s).
- Have a commitment to achieve more harmonious interpersonal and intergroup relations in their school(s).
- Select and encourage individuals to participate in the IHES group who represent a cross-section of the school community.
- Endorse the concepts of group problem solving and consensus decision making.
- Provide resources, time, and space for the IHES group to conduct its work.

To find out whether a commitment to the preconditions exists, a consultant from the Office of Intergroup Relations, State Department of Education, or, in some cases, a

district/site staff member familiar with the IHES program first meets with the central administrative leadership of a district or school. Usually, a superintendent and the consultant agree that an IHES program would be beneficial to the district or to particular schools in the district. Then the consultant makes an overview presentation to the principals in the district to determine who wishes to have an IHES group and trained facilitators at their school sites. Once the composition of the facilitator training group is established, an invitation to attend and participate in the training is extended to the district and site administrators as well. Their participation is helpful in ensuring that they have a clear working understanding of the content and process of an IHES group and that they have experienced how such a group can work in support of their goals. Although administrators are not expected or encouraged to function as facilitators in their own schools, many have chosen to facilitate meetings for their colleagues or for other organizations.

Composition of an IHES Group

The next step is to establish a diverse and representative IHES group at the school site. An IHES group includes teachers, students, parents, administrators, school staff, and community members. It is important that all groups concerned about the human environment of the school be represented because substantive change can rarely be effected unless most, if not all, of these groups are involved. In addition, membership should reflect the diversity of the school community in terms of such factors as ethnicity, sex, economic status, and grade level. Because these factors shape our perceptions of reality and because a broadened perspective of school human environment issues and concerns is essential for each member, the IHES group must reflect this diversity. Finally, the IHES group reflects a diversity of perspectives, philosophies, and attitudes toward the school. If everyone thinks the same way (e.g., all totally supportive or all totally critical of the school), the creative and synergistic aspects of problem solving are minimized.

Although you are not responsible as the facilitator for establishing the group, you may be asked to assist the principal in composing it. Or you may need to call to the principal's attention the importance of representation and balance in the group when these characteristics appear to be absent.

Finally, a successful IHES group meeting always has the chief administrator or his or her designee in attendance.

This person, as the chairperson of the IHES group, has official responsibility for the group, for calling meetings, and for coordinating follow-up work. Groups can flounder when the persons with legal authority in the school are not participating actively in the group's work; therefore, as facilitator you need to plan meeting times at the convenience of the central administrator or his or her designee and to spend time with this person as needed to encourage his or her commitment and involvement.

An IHES group must be large enough to have an impact on the school but small enough to provide opportunities for all members' participation and for you to facilitate comfortably. As a general rule representation and diversity are more important criteria than size in establishing an IHES group. A maximum-size IHES group consists of 15 participants. Although it is possible to use the IHES facilitation method in larger groups, special skills are needed; and such an attempt is not, therefore, recommended for beginning and intermediate facilitators. A minimum size for a group is six, although this size is also not recommended because an IHES group usually cannot meet composition requirements with so few members. Although general guidelines for size can be provided, they may have to be changed to reflect the needs of a particular school community. For example, a typical IHES group in a high school might include the following:

1. Administrators (one or two)
2. Other school staff (counselors, custodians, secretaries, aides) (one or two)
3. Teachers (three or four)
4. Parents (two or three)
5. Students (three to five)
6. Community representatives (one or two)

The group that you facilitate should include members from each of these categories.

Selection of members of an IHES group can be done in a number of ways. Usually, the principal invites nominations from the various school community groups by some elective or volunteer process. Making sure that individuals who wish to participate have knowledge of the opportunity to do so is the responsibility of the principal. He or she also makes appointments to the IHES group as necessary to meet the criteria of representativeness and diversity. When the list of potential members is complete, the invitation to join the group is, of course, extended by the chief administrator.

Now that you have some background information on what the typical process is for establishing an IHES group, you

should be aware that variations exist as well, particularly in the circumstances that may have led to its creation. In general, IHES groups are established for one of two reasons: (1) because a specific problem has been identified that requires immediate intervention; or (2) because a school community wishes to engage in prevention of problems and human environment improvement because it views these as desirable or necessary. When a group is established for the first reason, it is task-specific and may disband once it has completed its work. When a group is established for the second reason, it is ongoing and continues to function through periods of high and low activity, the purpose being to initiate action and monitor the quality of the human environment in the school. Most IHES groups are ongoing.

Selected References

The references listed here can provide additional information on small-group processes, conflict management, communication, and facilitation.

Auvine, B., and others. *A Manual for Group Facilitators.* Madison, Wis.: Center for Conflict Resolution, 1978.

A training manual for resource facilitators of problem-solving groups. Emphasis on conflict resolution. Includes helpful sections on group processes and techniques and on what to do when things go wrong.

Baker, W., and A. Scornaienchi. *Problem Solving and Cooperative Planning Guide.* Hayward, Calif.: Office of the Alameda County Superintendent of Schools, 1982.

A manual for leaders of problem-solving groups to assist them in planning and conducting meetings. Includes discussion of methods for categorizing, prioritizing, analyzing, and assessing ideas.

Corey, G., and M. S. Corey. *Groups: Process and Practice.* Monterey, Calif.: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1982.

Designed to aid counselors in leading individual change groups. Provides excellent suggestions for IHES facilitators on personal style.

Doyle, M., and D. Straus. *How to Make Meetings Work.* Chicago: Playboy Press, 1976.

A practical guide for the facilitator on how to conduct meetings by the interaction method.

Filley, A. *Interpersonal Conflict Resolution.* Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman & Co., 1975.

Provides excellent background material on the types and sources of conflict. Strategies and methods for resolving conflict also included.

Hetzel, R., and D. Barnard. "The Human Agenda: Critical Variable in Innovation," *Educational Leadership,* Vol. 30 (March, 1973), 526—28.

Presents a group model for effecting educational change.

Human Behavior and Leadership. Pensacola, Fla.: Naval Education and Training Program Development Center, 1977. ERIC Document Reproduction Service Number ED179-703.

Describes leadership styles, communication techniques, and methods of influencing human behavior. Group leadership and problem solving also discussed. Written for individual study by naval officers. Provides good introduction to interpersonal and group behavior.

Improving the Human Environment of Schools: Problems and Strategies. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1979.

A manual designed to assist principals in identifying, monitoring, and modifying human barriers in the school setting.

Napier, R. W., and M. K. Gershenfeld. *Groups: Theory and Experience.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1981.

Designed to provide understanding of group processes and improve skills as group leaders, particularly in human relations training, planned change, leadership development, and decision-making processes. An excellent background reading resource.

Zander, A. *Making Groups Effective.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1982.

A good nontechnical overview of the results of group dynamics research and its applications to group functioning.

Comments and Suggestions on *IHES Facilitation*

- Which items in the manual have you found particularly useful?

- What suggestions do you have for improving the manual?

- What other materials for IHES facilitators would you like to see included in future editions of the manual?

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